



Forest of Dean District Council

# Littledean Character Appraisal

January 2007

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## 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 recently adopted Forest of Dean District Council Local Plan 2005. Character appraisals will ultimately fit with the new Supplementary Planning Guidance for the historic environment.

As Littledean is an existing conservation area 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.

## Best Value Performance Indicators

In recent months 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 harmoniously in the village.

## Process

The draft character appraisal for Littledean Character Appraisal was subject to a four-week public consultation, which involved public exhibitions and a public meeting. The residents of Littledean were invited to make comments on the draft appraisal, all of which were considered by members of the Development Control Committee and Executive Committee, before agreeing to adopt the appraisal on the 23rd March 2006.

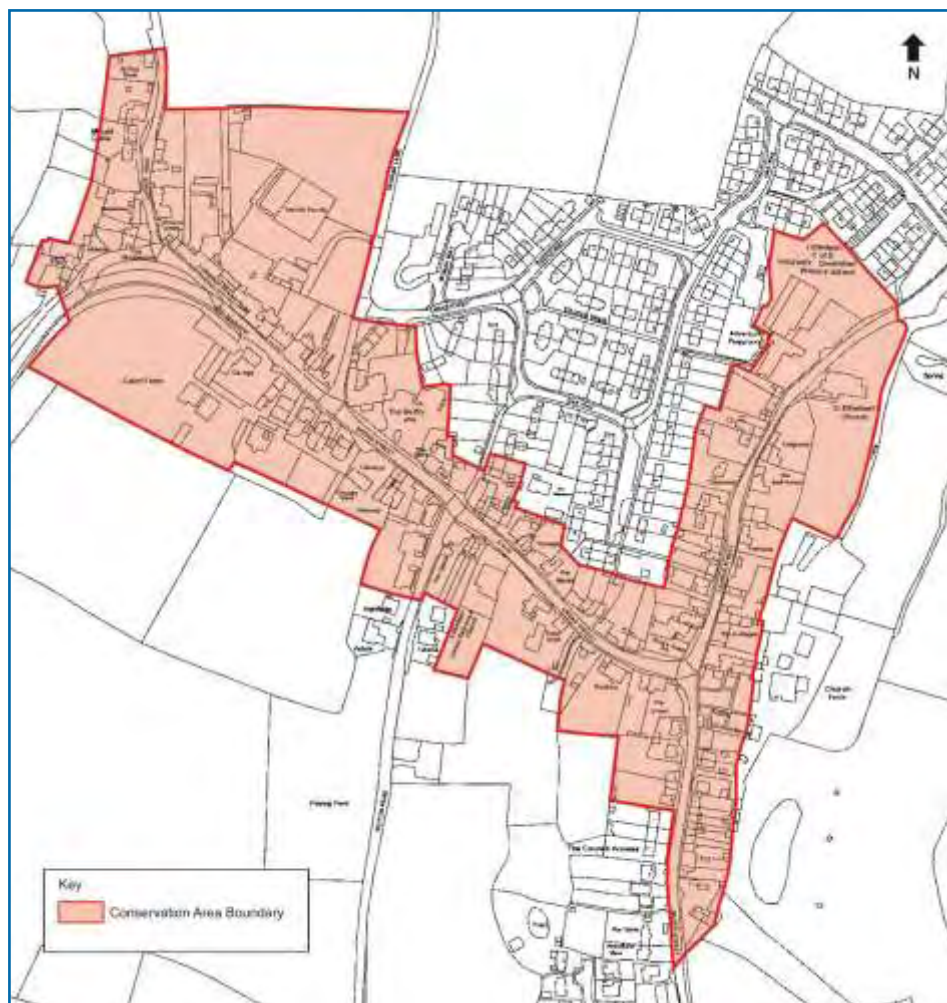
On the 23rd March 2006 the members of the Forest of Dean District Council also agreed to amend the boundary line of Littledean Conservation Area. An area of

land behind Littledean House Hotel was included in the conservation area.

The character appraisal is also the subject of a Sustainability Appraisal, in order to allow the document to be a Supplementary Planning Document. This gives the document sufficient weight to be used as evidence at planning appeals and therefore be of as much use to the Forest of Dean District Council as possible.

## Littledean Conservation Area

Littledean was designated a conservation area on the 22nd September 1988, the area covers 10.35 hectares, and is centred on the historic core of the village.





## Evolution of area

### Development

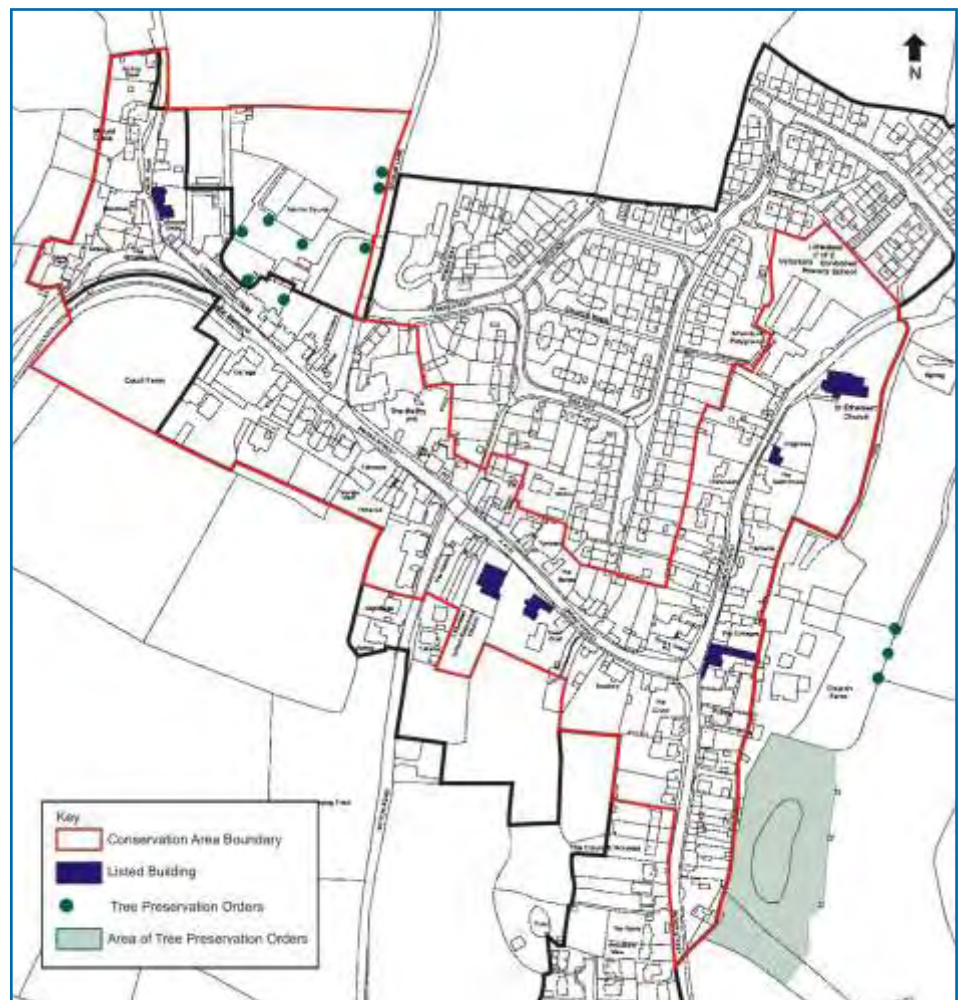
Littledean was originally a farming community, although small scale mining and cider making is recorded in the locality. There is evidence of industry and manufacturing in the village and surrounding area, which is reflected in the history of some of the older buildings.

Today Littledean is principally a commuter village with the majority of employment outside the settlement.

Littledean developed around a series of tracks, one of which is believed to be a Roman road linking, Gloucester to the Forest of Dean.

The building pattern of the settlement pre the 20th century can be described as ribbon development with the main built mass being constructed along the side of the main roads of the area.

Over the last century, development away from the road has principally been built in the forms of modern estates; these developments have caused the size of the village to increase dramatically and the form of the village to alter.



## Archaeological Significance

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Littledean Hall is also believed to have been the site of a Civil War skirmish in which two royalist officers were killed; a cannon ball from the civil war has been found between Littledean Hall and Dean Cottage.

There are a number of industrial remains in the area. A field walk of Chestnuts Hill identified 92 charcoal burning platforms and another 18 possible sites. Situated behind Church Farm House there is an important malt house, it is important as few survive, owing to the ease of converting them to other uses. Bloomery slag deposits and an iron ingot have been found in a field north of Littledean Goal.

## Townscape Analysis

### Setting

Littledean is situated to the east of the statutory Forest, where the landscape changes from dense woodland to open countryside and farmland. The areas of high ground surrounding the village consist of Chestnuts Hill, Dean Hill and Littledean Ridge. See Fig 1.

Located on a valley side, Littledean is surrounded by farmland. The shape of the valley within which the village lies causes the undulating form of Littledean as the buildings follow the contours of the land, which drop away to the north.

### Skyline

As the village of Littledean descends a slope, the impact of the skyline of the village varies. When approaching from the direction of Cinderford, the raised land to the east of the village and the mature trees that grow upon the brow dominate the skyline. See Fig 2.

When approaching from the north the village rises up hill and it is the rooflines of the properties and also the trees that dominate the surrounding land and form the skyline. See Fig 3.

### Approaches

The approaches to the village are attractive and present a pleasant view of the area.



Fig 1.



Fig 2.



Fig 3.



Fig 4.



Fig 5.



Fig 6.



Fig 7.

A visitor either travels down into the village and has an extensive view of the settlement and the surrounding land, or travels up through the village and is enclosed by the properties and is not aware of the overall layout of the village.

As the conservation area is entered from the north, the road sweeps round a corner and into the village this causes a sense of movement to be formed as centre of the village is hidden from view. *See Fig 4.*

The church at this point in the village is at its most visible and impressive as its tower rises above the surrounding buildings.

Entering from the Cinderford direction the road is wide and the properties are set back, which gives the road a more open aspect, and the settlement is more easily appreciated. *See Fig 5.*

### Landmarks

Littledean has no major defining landmarks as the church tower or spire, which is normally the most prominent structure in a village's skyline, does not dominant the skyline as the church is situated in the lower area of the village and the surrounding buildings climb uphill raising above the level of the church.

The Church may have been visible from a distance in the past, as it once had a spire, but it was removed in 1894 following storm damage.

War memorials are also used to define an area, however Littledean's war memorial has been moved to the Millennium Garden.

The definition of a landmark is 'a conspicuous object that can be used to identify a locality.' Littledean Jail and Littledean Hall are important buildings, which identify the village, but neither building is conspicuous and therefore can not be described as landmarks.

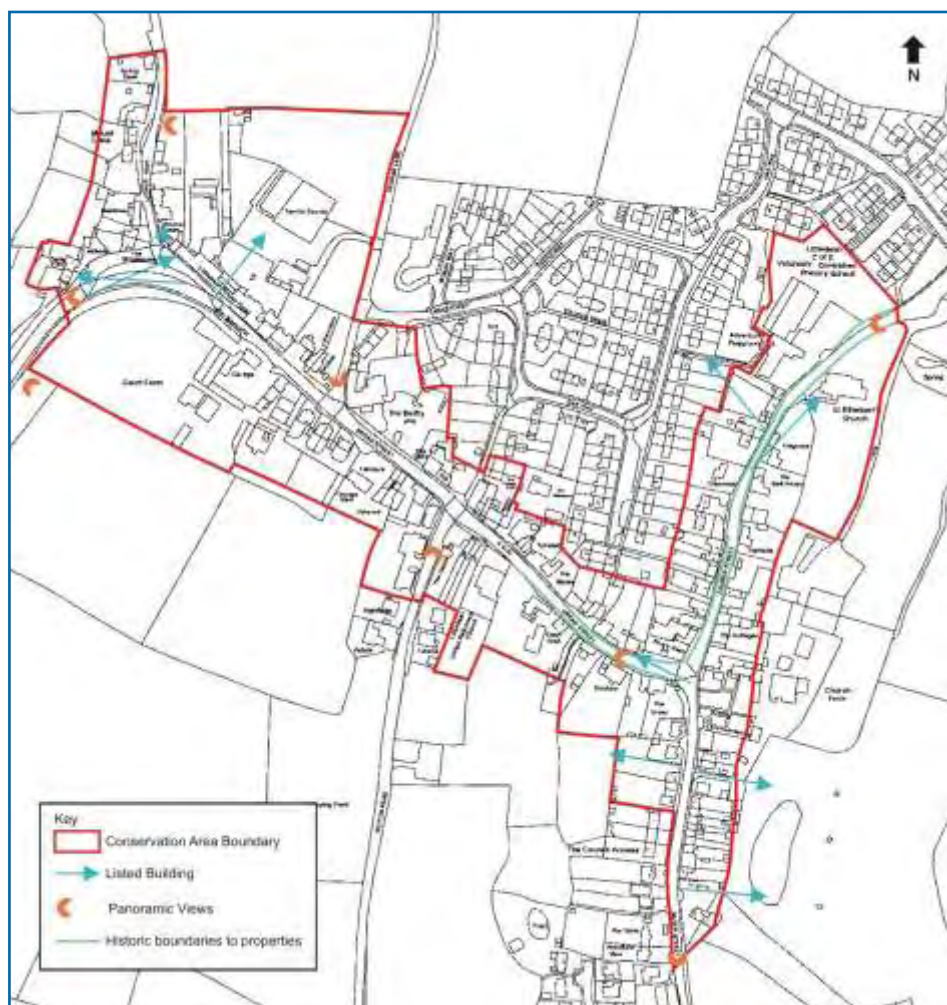
### Views

The form of Littledean and its surrounding landscape means that there are many glimpses of the open countryside to be seen around the village.

The majority of the built form of Littledean can be described as semi-continuous frontage, this means that the properties are not built side by side and do not form a solid boundary, but that the properties are generally linked in some form, whether it be by stone wall or by hedge rows, and this does form a continuous boundary with a variety of height lines. It is through these breaks that the surrounding area can be glimpsed. *See Fig 6 & 7.*



Many wider panoramic views of the surrounding landscape are evident throughout the village; these are produced by the changes in levels in and around the area. See Fig 8 & 9.



### Structure

The main historic core of village is described as a nucleated settlement, which means that development was originally centred on a number of streets, with the market place at its centre. These areas are often medieval in origin; the medieval market place at Littledean was in the area in front of the Kings Head Pub, where there once stood a market cross.

### Hierarchy

If the hierarchy of the village as a whole is considered then the buildings with the most standing are the Church, Littledean Hall and Littledean Jail, the domain of religion, the gentry and the law. However only the church falls within the conservation area and therefore it can be described as the building with most eminence. See Fig 10.

The original school building in Littledean has had the focus of the site drawn away by the modern school buildings. Its main elevation faces to the north and is most visible when travelling from the Westbury-on-Severn direction. See Fig 11.

Brayne Court situated on High Street is in parts a 16th Century building, it is believed that part of the building maybe the remains of a parlour and solar to a medieval hall situated to their east. Many additions to the property have been made over the centuries but the importance of the building remains evident.



Fig 8.

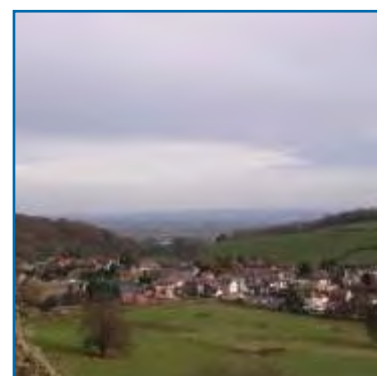


Fig 9.



Fig 10.



Fig 11.





Fig 12.



Fig 13.

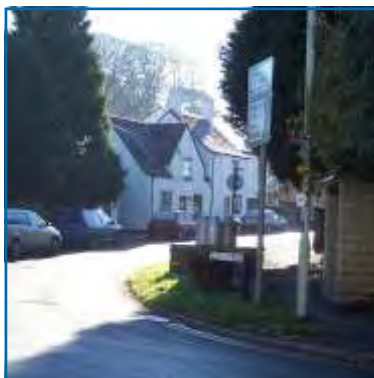


Fig 14.



Fig 15.

Building such as Littledean House Hotel, the Kings Head, Frogmore and Church Farm all incorporate elements of formal architectural design within them. However the majority of the remaining buildings are simple and functional in design, which is part of the areas charm, a building decorated with friezes or an intricate façade would be at odds with the unadorned buildings found in Littledean.

### Quality of Spaces

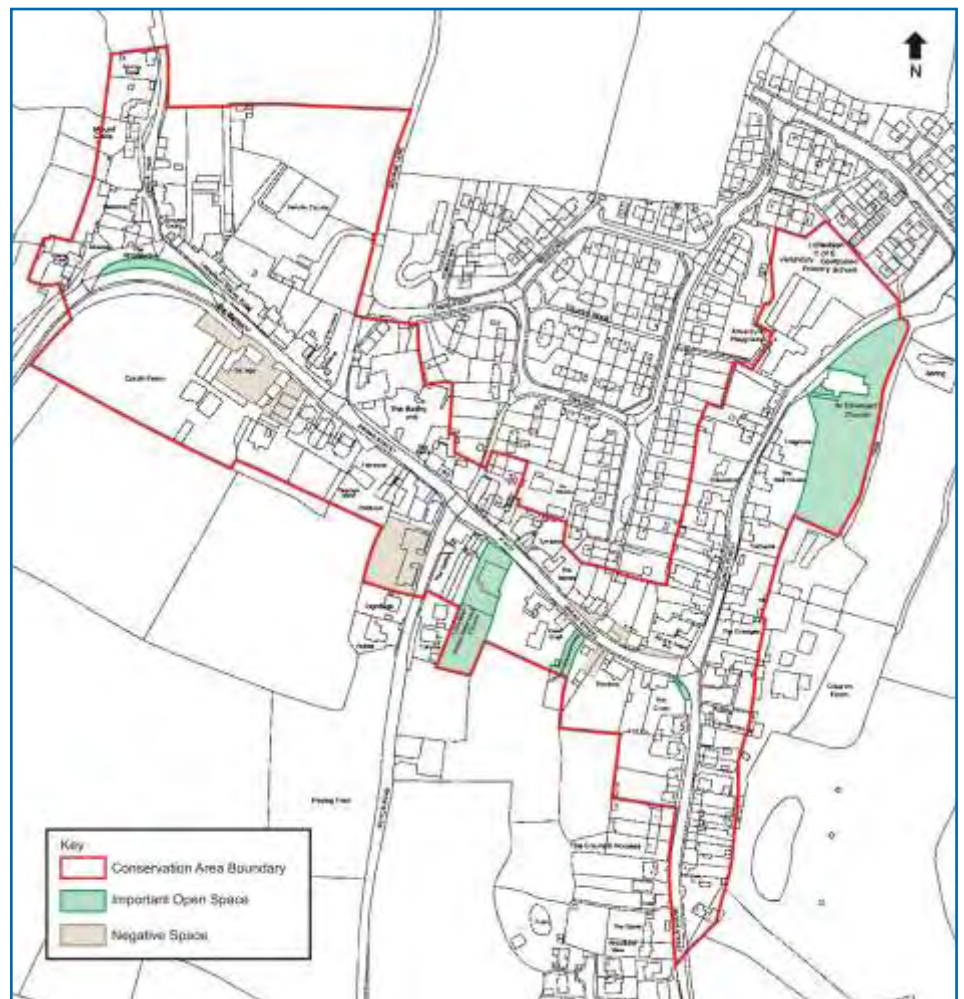
The largest tract of open land within the conservation area is the churchyard of St.Ethelbert's; however a tall wall surrounds this land isolating the area. It is a pleasant, peaceful area, within which grow a number of attractive trees including large holly trees; a number of the tombs are listed. *See Fig 12.*

The verge of raised ground in front of Littledean House Hotel is another attractive and important space; the trees break up the large white frontage of Littledean House Hotel and separate the Ruffit from the main area of the village. *See Fig 13.*

A section of land at the junction between the three main streets has been landscaped with a monument in memory of the Dairymen who once worked in the village; the space is small but provides a break from the built up frontages of the streets. *See Fig 14.*

There are a number of gap sites within the conservation area, some of which could benefit from enhancement. Many of these are areas given over for use as off road parking, they lack a sense of enclosure due to the removal of the boundary wall.

Large areas of tarmac in front of the Kings Head and Oakdale Cottage are unattractive and do not utilize the areas to their full potential. *See Fig 15.*



Towards the upper end of Broad Street The Garage is a space that is unattractive and although some of the buildings are the original buildings associated with Court Farm they are dominated by a large inappropriate shelter. The open layout of the courtyard is at odds with the enclosed nature of the conservation area and would benefit from enhancement. See Fig 16.

## Landscape setting

### Topography

Littledean is situated in a valley and because of this the settlement is fairly sheltered, this has restricted the development of Littledean to a linear pattern. See Fig 17.

The ridge is formed from Devonian sandstone; the rock is generally red as it contains red iron oxide, this stone can be seen used as a building material throughout the settlement.

The land use is mainly farmland; field boundary hedgerows generally follow the pattern of the contours of the ridge, therefore highlighting them and forming a backdrop to Littledean.

### Identification of sub areas

#### Sub area 1

Church Street and Broad Street up to the United Reform Church.

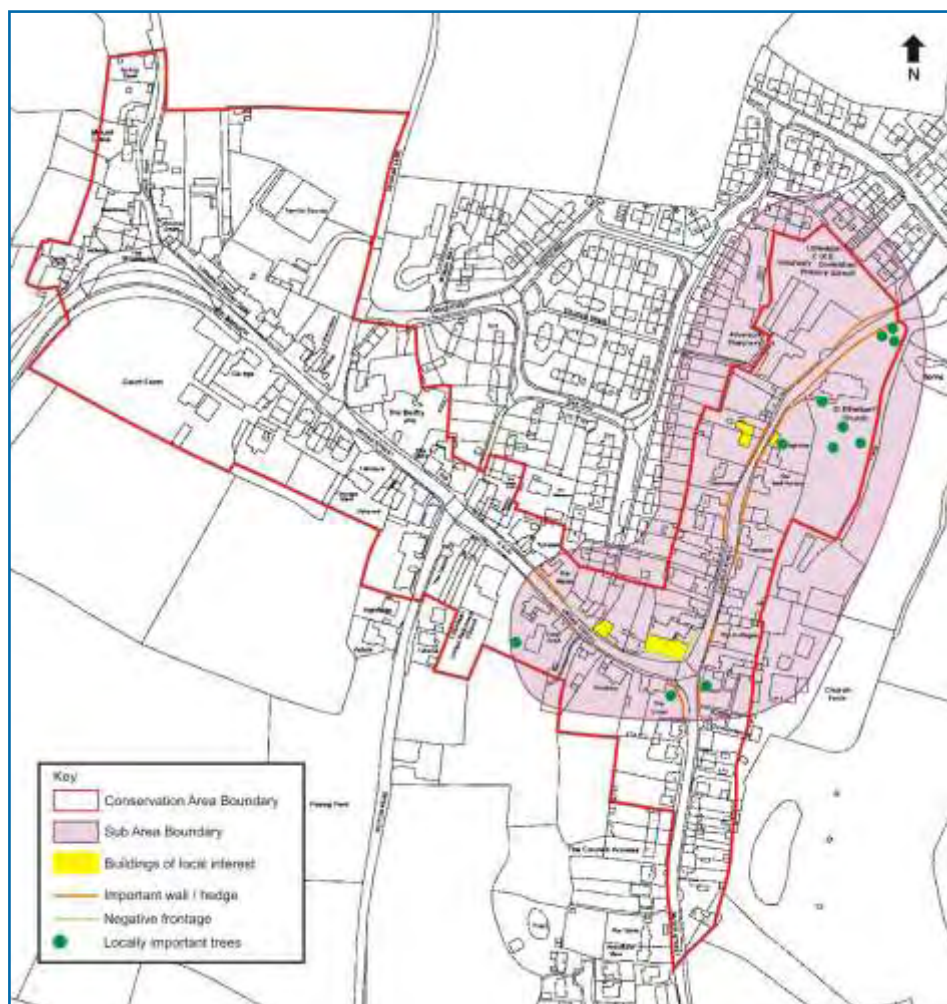


Fig 16.



Fig 17.





Fig 18.



Fig 19.



Fig 20.



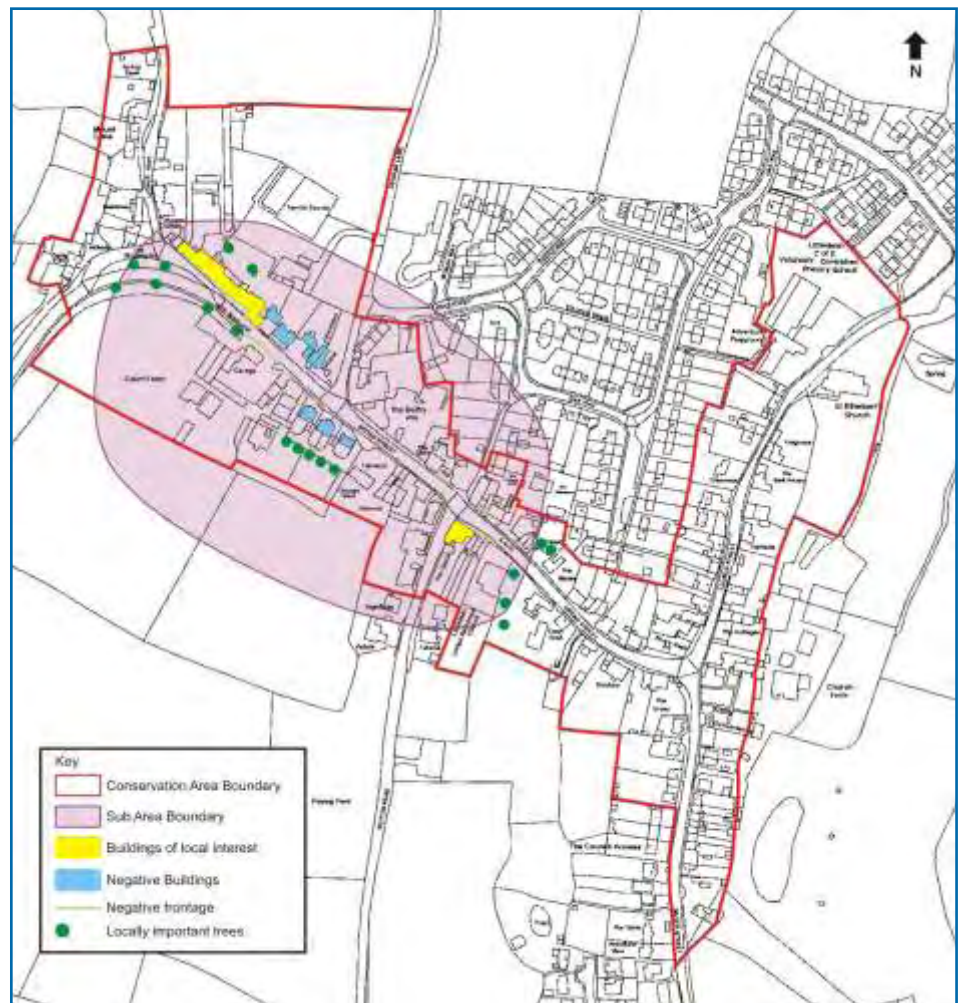
Fig 21.

Its semi-continuous frontage defines this area; the street front is a continuous line of structure, in the form of buildings and walls, which sweeps around following the curves of the streets. The mainly two story buildings create a sense of enclosure along the road. The simple vernacular designs of the properties sit harmoniously together, and compliment each other. See Fig 18 & 19.

In an area where the frontage is defined as semi-continuous the links such as walls and outbuildings are fundamental to the character of an area. These links maintain the flow of the building line, if they were lost the buildings would stand in isolation, and the continuity of the streetscape would become fragmented.

### Sub area 2

Upper end of Broad Street



At the upper end of Broad Street, from the United Reform Church onwards, the properties form a low-density frontage. That is to say the spaces between the buildings increases, and the street line becomes less defined by the buildings. Some of the properties in this area are setback from the road, by front gardens.

Within this particular section of the village, Littledean loses its close-knit form, the streetscape is weaker due to an inconsistency in street frontage, and a variety of building designs lead to a lack of unity. See Fig 20 & 21.

A series of new infill sites on the south of Broad Street are laid out with the buildings stepped back from each other. This form of frontage is not in keeping

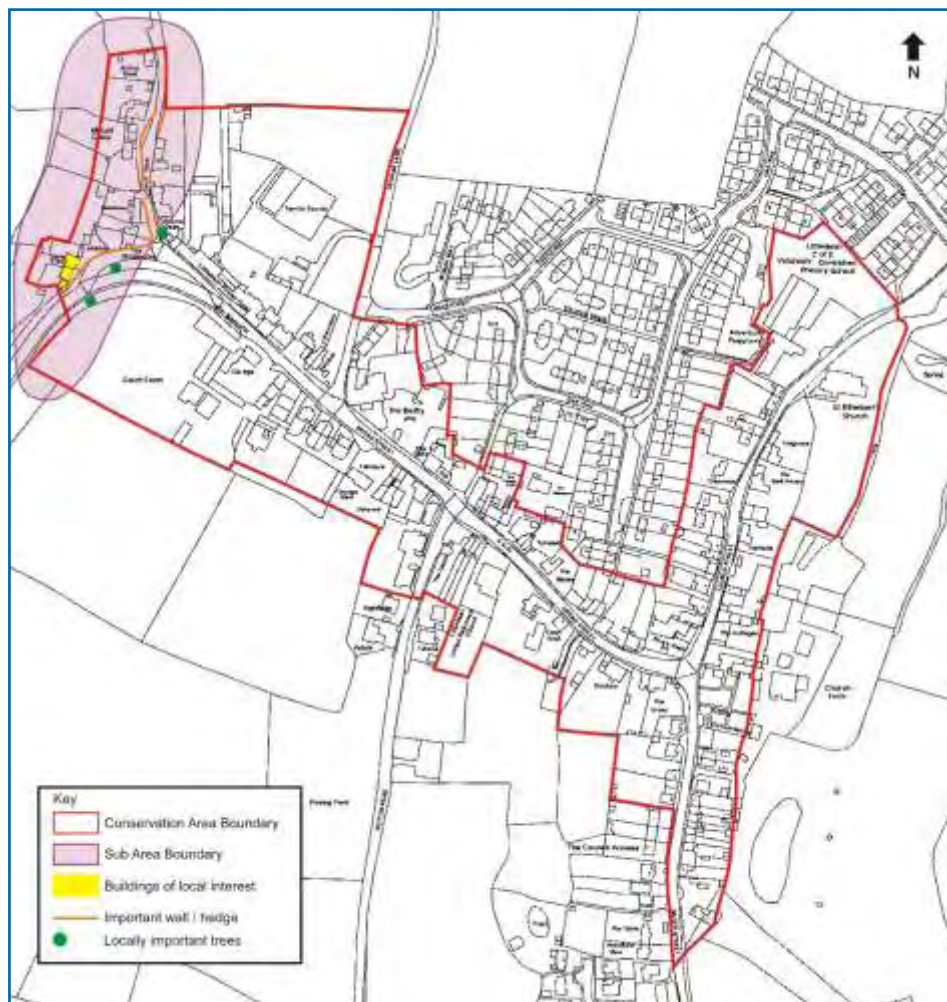


with any historic form in Littledean and is therefore conflicts with the general appearance of the conservation area. See Fig 22.

Along Broad Street there are a series of shops, the shop fronts are modern in design and not aesthetic. See Fig 23.

### Sub area 3

The Ruffit - including High Street



The Ruffit has a character that is more in keeping of a separate small rural settlement; the buildings are low density with a green edge frontage. Each property appears to sit in its own landscape with the continuity being maintained by hedges and walls. The buildings are vernacular in style with a unity of material in the form of red sandstone and render. See Fig 24.

New buildings blend into the streetscape because to the planting to the front of the properties, which links with the green edge frontage of the more historical properties. The properties also sympathise with the historic buildings scale and height of two storeys, which is important in maintaining the areas special character. See Fig 25.



Fig 22.

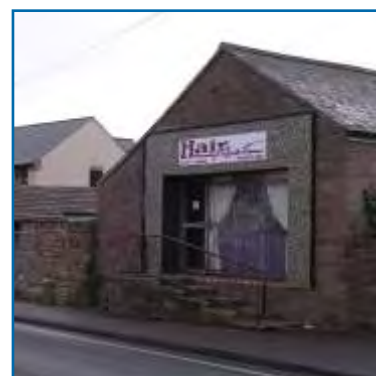


Fig 23.



Fig 24.



Fig 25.

## Sub area 4

### Silver Street



Fig 26.

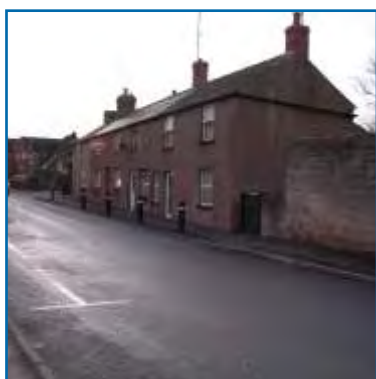
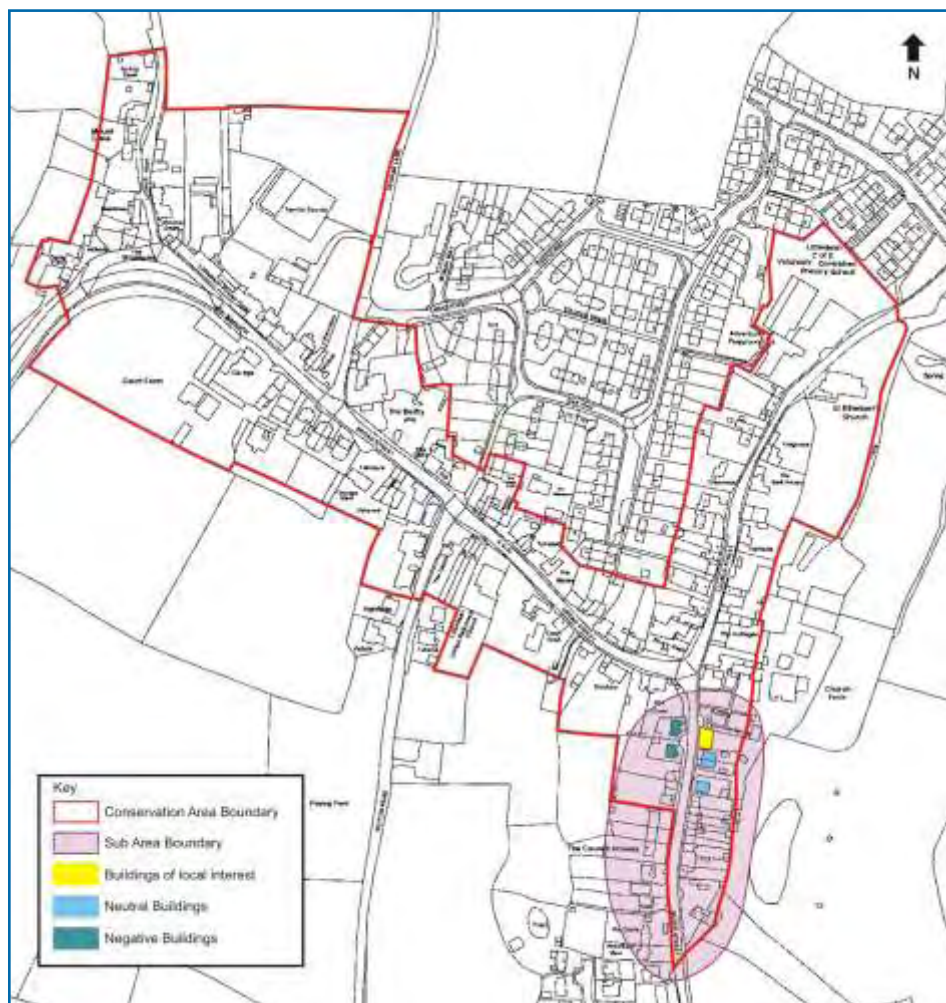


Fig 27.



Fig 28.



The street carries far less traffic than Church Street and Broad Street, and is mainly residential, developed later than areas of Church Street and Broad Street. The buildings have a more structured style and design than elsewhere in the village as groups were built together, rather than developing independently as they have done on the other streets of the conservation area. The houses do however still front the road as seen in Church Street, and are terraced. See Fig 26 & 27.

There are two sites of recent development on the east side of Silver Street, these properties don't follow the original building pattern, as they are set back from the road with a garden frontage, these buildings create a break in the continuous frontage and therefore weaken the building line.

However it is the development of two houses on the west side of Silver Street that are the most damaging. The imitation stone facade of the buildings does not relate to any of the building material found within the village, and neither does the built form of the properties. Although a positive aspect of the properties is that they have instated a low boundary wall of which similar examples can be found throughout the conservation area. See Fig 28.

The conservation area boundary runs alongside the garden edge of 18 Silver Street therefore excluding much of the newer development that runs along the south side of the street, as the estate is not historic in nature.



# Condition of built fabric

## Buildings

Generally the buildings within the conservation area are well maintained, as a large percentage are occupied as homes. It is evident that some properties have had UPVC windows fitted, which do not enhance the special character of either the building or the area as a whole.

A number of outbuildings and walls in the conservation area would benefit from repointing using appropriate materials to maintain their special character and appearance. See Fig 29.

Littledean House Hotel's façade is beginning to look a little worn, and its appearance would be greatly improved if the building were to be repainted. As one of the major buildings in the area its appearance affects peoples perception of the area.

## Occupation levels

There are two buildings currently empty within Littledean Conservation area, one of which is the Kings Head Pub; this building is in a very prominent position and the appearance of the boarded up frontages has a detrimental effect on the area. See Fig 30.

The other building forms part of a semi detached building with Oakdale. The property appears to be empty with its timber windows and doors beginning to suffer from lack of maintenance, however the impact of the vacant building on the village is much less then that of the Kings Head.

## Negative Spaces

The positive spaces are described in Quality of Spaces.

## Potential areas which could be enhanced

Within the conservation area there are a number of spaces which improvement schemes could be devised for. The garage on Broad Street is one such area, as is the forecourt of Littledean School. See Fig 31.

One way to enhance these areas could be to instate a boundary wall as this would screen from view areas such as car parks, and would improve the street frontages as they would provide continuation of the historic building line.

## Street furniture

The quality of the street furniture in Littledean is varied. The bollards used within the area are attractive in shape as well as functional, however furniture such as bus shelters is standard and not designed to enhance an area. There is scope to consider alternate designs when these items are due for replacement. See Fig 32.

The street lamps in Littledean are standard and have little design merit other then being functional, a more attractive and unusual light design could be considered when the lights next need to be replaced.

Satellite dishes can be very obtrusive if not position sensitively on a building, this is demonstrated by the new development on Broad Street, ideally the dishes would be hidden behind a chimney stack or at least in a less prominent position.

## Wirescape

The wirescape of Littledean varies. Around the Kings Head Pub the wirescape is highly intrusive as there is a large number of wires massing on the corner of the



Fig 29.



Fig 30.

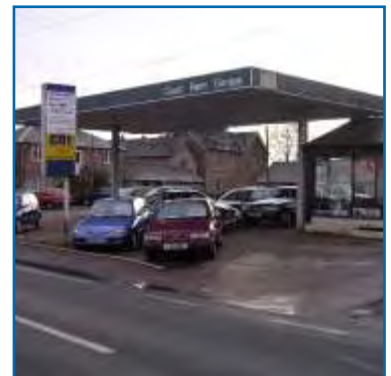


Fig 31.



Fig 32.





Fig 33.



Fig 34.



Fig 35.

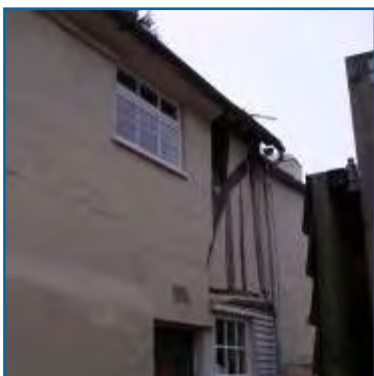


Fig 36.

building. These are not just single wires, a number are coiled together and are very visible. See Fig 33.

In other areas of the village the wirescape runs parallel to the roadside which has a less detrimental effect on the area. At the entrance of the Ruffit there is a rather unusual telegraph pole, it has a lattice design and although it is rather imposing it does have design merit.

## 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.

A large proportion of the buildings within Littledean are vernacular in style. Many of the buildings are built of the red sandstone, which was quarried locally, and for the number of remaining timber framed buildings; the timber will have been sourced from the surrounding woodlands.

There are a small number of properties that exhibit polite architecture, for example Littledean Hotel has Georgian proportions and sliding sash windows. Church Farmhouse also has elements of polite architecture within its design, however it is an example of polite architecture being used in a way that mixes both vernacular materials with polite styling. See Fig 34 & 35.

### Materials

Render and red sandstone are the most common materials, with either slate or clay-tiled roofs. The render is painted a variety of different colours, but on the whole the colours are subtle and neutral.

Within the conservation area the majority of the walls and outbuildings are constructed from random coursed red sandstone.

One building in the conservation area exhibits its timber framing, but it is likely that a number of buildings conceal a timber frame within. See Fig 36.

Some properties and boundary walls on Broad Street are constructed from bricks that are much larger in size than that of a standard brick.

### Paving traditions

Any paving traditions that may once have been found in Littledean have been virtually lost, a vast proportion of the highways and footpaths in the conservation area are standard tarmac. The only remaining area of historical paving is a footpath running along side Brayne Court, where large slabs of natural stone have been used. There may be scope for the tarmac areas to be paved using a more traditional material.

# Activities, uses and linkages

## Uses

The A4151, which runs through Littledean, is one of the main thoroughfares into the Forest, high levels of traffic pass through the village. Whilst this level of traffic does have a detrimental affect on the character of the area, it benefits the business community, such as shops and public houses that line the route. This passing trade produces a social atmosphere around the pubs

The post office and grocery shops on Broad Street are well frequented by passing trade, however the cars park on the roadside rather than using the public car park on Sutton Street, this causes congestion along that section of the street.

## Images and associations

### Sounds

The main background noise in the village is produced by the almost continuous flow of traffic along Church Street and Broad Street.

Other than the flow of traffic the relative peace of Littledean is broken periodically throughout the day by the sound of the school children at break time and during games lessons. Much laughter and shouting can be heard along the length of Church Street.

### Smells

At the top end of Broad Street there is a chip shop and two pubs, both serving food, so at various times of the day the smells of food emanates around this section of the conservation area.

## SWOT Analysis

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

### Strengths

- The villages setting within the surrounding countryside
- Attractive historic building line along Church Street and lower Broad Street
- An architecturally and historically important Church, grade I listed
- Buildings showing good vernacular architecture
- Street layout is interesting and of historic importance
- The boundaries of properties are very important in the area as they create a sense of enclosure.

### Weaknesses

- The weakening of the street line in sub area two, the upper end of Broad Street
- Infill sites which don't relate to the original street form, which are evident throughout the conservation area
- Large areas of tarmac do not enhance the appearance of the settlement
- Modern shop fronts which are intrusive
- Gap sites such as Court Farm Garage have a detrimental effect as they result in a loss of the sense of enclosure.

### Opportunities

- When the street furniture needs to be replaced, new bespoke designs could be produced for Littledean
- The careful selection of appropriate materials used for paving would greatly improve the area.
- Although the development of gap sites can have a detrimental effect to the special character of the area, they can also present an opportunity to further improve the conservation area through sensitive development.

### Threats

- Inappropriate development in terms of design, materials, layout or scale poses one of the greatest threats to this settlement.
- Infill of gap sites that add to the special character of the village; which could result in the demolition of important boundary walls, would have a adverse effect on the streetscape
- The high volume of traffic through Littledean detracts from the character of the area by creating noise nuisance, detracts from the visual appearance of the main street.
- Car parking on the road near the shops create a bottleneck and a congregation of cars.



## 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.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.

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

There are no major financial resource implications arising out of this character analysis for local authorities, other than the suggestion of the need to deal with wirescape, street furniture and paving.

There are extremely limited resources available from central or local government specifically to maintain Littledean conservation area; however the character appraisal maybe useful for Littledean 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 the village. 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 Littledean needs to be monitored over the coming years in order to control the small alterations which take place, but which could eventually erode significantly the character of Littledean. 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 carryout the necessary works the local authority may do so, 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 where the 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.

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

### **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**

Littledean has a small number of buildings that are in need of repair, but none are listed, which means that Littledean conservation area has no buildings formally identified on its Buildings at Risk register. However the Kings Head is vacant and clearly does not enhance the character or appearance of the area, the lowering of the adjacent wall has been left in an unfinished state and is an inappropriate condition. Serious consideration will need to be taken as to the best way forward in the short term with respect to this building; it is in situations such as this that the enforcement powers could be of use.

## **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.

There are a number of ways in which the Local Authority could guide the enhancement of Littledean.

### **Paving**

A scheme could be devised to improve the quality of the paving in the conservation area. Tarmac is material that is uniform in appearance and has limited historic merit, stone sets could be introduced which would greatly improve the visual impact of the area.

### **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 will reduce the clutter seen at the roof height of the buildings.

### **Street furniture**

The street furniture found in Littledean is mostly of standard issue in its design and of limited merit. Therefore a possible opportunity to improve the area could be the instatement of bespoke street furniture such as benches and street lamps when the



current ones require replacing. The removal of satellite dishes from the front of properties and repositioning them out of sight would improve the visual impact of a number of properties.

### **Occupation levels**

The occupation levels of Littledean as a whole are generally very good. However the Kings Head pub is a very prominent building and its appearance has a detrimental effect on the surrounding area. The appropriate reuse and occupation of this particular building should enhance the village greatly, encouraging the reuse of this building need's to be established as a short-term objective.

### **Areas for enhancement**

There are a number of areas within Littledean that have been identified as possible areas for enhancement, each of these areas would have to be considered on their own merits and different strategies produced for their improvement. Court Farm Garage is one such area that currently has a negative effect on Littledean, but redevelopment of the site in future could greatly enhance the village; in order for appropriate development to be carried out the production of a design brief for the area would be highly beneficial.

A number of smaller gap sites have also been identified, one option that would lead to a general improvement in most of these areas would be the reinstatement of the boundary wall, whether it be rebuilt to a previous height or building a new one.

### **Traffic management**

Littledean would be greatly improved if the amount of traffic travelling through the centre of the settlement could be reduced, however as the main route into the area from the A48 this is unlikely to be achieved. Improvements will have to be restricted to improved traffic management and the use of appropriate surfacing materials.

### **Shop fronts**

There are a number of inappropriate and intrusive shop fronts on Broad Street which could be enhanced as the opportunity arises in the future.

## **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 provided that 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 that any perceived conflicts of legislation can be identified and resolved in a manner that satisfies the current requirements of the relevant 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.

However the protection granted by the designation of conservation areas does not normally extend to hedges or small scale planting. The loss of such features should be deeply considered before the work is carried out, as the impact on the conservation area could be harmful, both visually and ecologically.

## **Conclusion**

Littledean is a historic settlement in the Forest of Dean with its own special architectural and historic character. It also has significant archaeological features in the locality. It is therefore important that the character and setting of Littledean is safeguarded, hence the designation of the village as a conservation area.

On its own the designation will not fully safeguard the area's special character. It is the responsibility of all those with an interest in the area including developers, planners, agencies and organisations responsible for services in the public domain and not least local residents to respond sensitively to change in the village and its surroundings. This document will aid in this decision making process by clearly identifying the issues of primary importance to maintaining Littledean's special character.

The Forest of Dean District Council has limited funds to enhance the area but

intends to work with developers; agencies and other organisations with an interest in undertaking work in the village. When initiatives are proposed, sound conservation advice will be offered to try to ensure that the special character is safeguarded and enhanced wherever possible for the benefit of the existing and future generations of the area.