

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

CABINET

18 MARCH 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CULTURE AND REGENERATION

RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO LEADER - ENVIRONMENT

CANNOCK CHASE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (LDF)

CONSERVATION AREAS: APPRAISALS AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

KEY DECISION – YES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To give consideration to a number of Conservation Area Appraisals (Draft Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Draft Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area Appraisal) and Management Plans (Draft Generic Conservation Area Management Plan, Draft Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan and Draft Brereton Conservation Area Management Plan) and to approve them for consultation.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the following documents for consultation:
- i. Draft Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal
 - ii. Draft Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area Appraisal
 - iii. Draft Generic Conservation Area Management Plan SPD
 - iv. Draft Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan SPD
 - v. Draft Brereton Conservation Area Management Plan SPD
- 2.2 That the Director of Culture and Regeneration (or anyone so authorised by him), in consultation with the Environment Sustainability Leader, be authorised to make non-substantive changes to the above documents prior to consultation taking place.

3. Summary (inc. brief overview of relevant background history)

- 3.1 In order to progress the heritage evidence base supporting the Local Development Framework a package of draft Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans have been produced for consultation. These have specifically been compiled to support the emerging Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan by providing it with 'character areas' and setting out the improvements to the public realm and individual buildings which will need to be undertaken if the plan is to be successful. Once complete the documents will help in justifying the need for developer contributions from planning approvals in support of improvements and support the case in bidding to English Heritage for partnership funding.
- 3.2 The draft Appraisal documents attached at Annex's 1 and 2 to this report seek to provide a clear definition of the special architectural or historic interest that warranted designation of Rugeley Town Centre and the Trent and Mersey Canal as Conservation Areas. They cover development history, a townscape appraisal, a description of features which detract from the special character and enhancement opportunities/planning policy guidance for the future. It is

proposed to illustrate the consultation Drafts with associated plans and photographs. Consultations will be carried out with Staffordshire County Council, Rugeley Town Council, Brereton and Ravenhill Parish Council, The Landor Society, English Heritage, the Government Office for the West Midlands and local ward councillors. Occupiers of all properties in each Conservation Area will receive publicity about that document, inviting comments. Copies will be published on the Council's website and paper copies placed in local libraries and Council offices. After the consultation period has ended the representations received will be considered and reported back to Cabinet, including suggested amendments to the documents as appropriate, before adoption.

- 3.3 The draft Management Plan documents attached at Annex's 3, 4 and 5 follow on from the Appraisals, setting out in detail the means by which the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas might be pursued. The Generic Management Plan sets out a package of generic measures available to the Council to apply to all of its Conservation Areas, and a series of area-specific Management Plans relating to individual Conservation Areas sets out detailed recommendations for action. The Management Plans seek to encourage debate on how the issues might be addressed. Consultation and publicity are expected to follow a similar procedure as proposed for the Appraisals. Involvement of the local community in development of the Management Plan is essential if the proposals are to succeed and the long term viability of the Conservation Areas as important assets is to be secured. A 'partnership' approach will provide the local community with the opportunity to suggest ideas for the enhancement of their Conservation Area and determine priorities for action.

4. Key issues and Implications

- 4.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on the Local Authority to designate conservation areas where appropriate. Section 71 requires the Local Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation or enhancement of these areas.
- 4.2 Appraisals are the first stage in this process and when completed help form part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework. Management Plans are the subsequent stage responding to Appraisals by putting forward specific proposals for ensuring the continued conservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas.
- 4.3 Whilst the Council has already undertaken Appraisals for some of its eight Conservation Areas the process has not been completed. In remedying this, the opportunity has been taken to update some of the older Appraisals. No management Plans have been produced to date.
- 4.4 This report therefore seeks to improve the policy position on Conservation Areas within the District by providing a package of reports which will commence the process of preservation and enhancement. In selecting priorities particular attention has been given to Rugeley in support of the emerging Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan. The Appraisals of the Town Centre and Trent and Mersey Canal will help inform the evidence base for the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan by identifying 'character areas' and helping to define priority areas for action within the public realm. Emphasis on 'character areas' as a key element of regeneration has been emphasised by the Government Office for the West Midlands.
- 4.5 **Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area** was designated in 1973 and covers the historic core of the town including the main shopping streets and squares. There are seven listed

buildings within the Area. Its long history is still evident in its traditional layout of narrow winding streets, mixed small scale retail/commercial uses and markets and townscape of diverse building types and groups. The Appraisal updates two previous documents and highlights the town's positive features, including its buildings of architectural and historic interest, the contribution made by its tree planting and its characteristic building materials, as well as identifying negative aspects, such as the amount of street 'clutter', the visual effect of unsympathetic shop signage, the deterioration of building fabric and the visual impact of the encircling car parks, service areas and busy roads. The Appraisal concludes with some recommendations for future action to address the matters raised.

- 4.6 **The Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area** was designated by Staffordshire County Council in 1988 as a county wide Conservation Area. It runs through this District from Brindley Bank Pumping Station on Wolseley Road passing to the east of Rugeley town centre and southwards through Brereton alongside the Towers business park. The boundary was extended in 2005 and now includes some groups of historic buildings beside the Canal such as the listed Pumping Station, listed St Augustine's Church and Old Chancel, the Old Mill on Mill Lane, the Mossley Tavern and cottages and Brewery Cottages. The Appraisal outlines the Area's history and outstanding industrial archaeological importance from construction of the canal from 1766 as one of the nation's principal transport routes to its role today. The visual impact of its landscape and townscape setting is of importance in maintaining its character and appearance into the future, and the Canal has significant potential as a historic asset in regeneration of this part of the District.
- 4.7 **Management Plans:** Following on from Appraisals of the Conservation Areas the next step is the preparation of Management Plans to set out the means by which preservation and enhancement of their character and appearance might be pursued. The approach being taken comprises an overall Generic Management Plan, setting out a package of measures available to the Council to apply to all of its Conservation Areas, and a series of concise, area-specific Management Plans relating to the individual areas, including recommendations for action, which will need to be read together. The Appraisal and Management documents are intended to result in an understanding of why the Areas are important and how change, including new development, could be accommodated whilst reinforcing the special character. The plans seek to encourage debate on how the issues might be addressed. The Generic Plan includes such measures as development control powers, advice and guidance; a strategy for enhancement of the public realm; encouragement to repair and raise standards; and the intention to create a 'Local List' of buildings valued for their contribution to the local scene. Area specific Management Plans have so far been prepared for Rugeley Town Centre and Brereton, highlighting ways in which the detailed management of these Areas could be progressed and monitored.
- 4.8 **The Generic Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** will provide recommendations for action in all Conservation Areas which enables slimmer and more focussed area specific Management Plans to then be prepared for individual Conservation Areas. By preparing all Management Plans as SPD it ensures they will have status in plan making and development control decisions
- 4.9 Prioritising **Rugeley Town Centre** as the first of the Area Specific Management Plans will help support delivery of the Area Action Plan. It will provide the detail for attracting developer contributions in support of improvements to the public realm and buildings. It will also be used as a key document in bidding for Partnership funding from English Heritage. Such funding (if

the bid is successful) will be used to match funding provided via developer contributions. English Heritage have already indicated Rugeley Town Centre is a suitable candidate for a bid.

- 4.10 **Brereton Conservation Area Management Plan** is also included in the package as the Appraisal was recently completed with strong local interest at local community/Parish Council level and because work is already well advanced in preparing a Draft Management Plan.

5. Conclusions and Reason(s) for the Recommendation(s)

- 5.1 Preparation of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans are a recognised means of the Council meeting their duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to preserve and enhance Conservation Areas.

- 5.2 By aligning production of Conservation Area documents with the Local Development Framework plan making process there are advantages in terms of provision of a strengthened heritage evidence base and helping to demonstrate effective delivery. This is particularly the case with the package of documents being presented which have been prioritised to support preparation of the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan.

6. Other Options Considered

- 6.1 The Council has a duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation or enhancement of Conservation Areas. No other options have therefore been considered.

7. Report Author Details

- 7.1 Angela Grove Senior Planning Officer x4517

SCHEDULE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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Annex 1, 2, 3 etc

Section 1

Contribution to Council Priorities (i.e. CHASE, Corporate Plan)

Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans contribute specifically to the Environment priority of CHASE by encouraging the conservation of the District's historic environment and sustaining local heritage. They also raise awareness in local people of what matters in historic environment terms and why, and therefore contributes to safer and stronger communities.

Section 2

Contribution to Promoting Community Engagement

A key requirement of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans is community involvement as a fundamental part of their preparation.

Section 3

Financial Implications

There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

Any costs associated with production of appraisals and consultations are contained within existing budgets.

In the event of any specific developer contributions being received then further reports would be required detailing the proposal for inclusion within future S.106 Capital Programmes.

Section 4

Legal Implications

The legal implications are set out throughout the report.

Section 5

Human Resource Implications

There are no human resource implications in the report.

Section 6

Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

There are no identified implications in respect of Section 17 (Crime Prevention) arising from this report.

Section 7

Human Rights Act Implications

None identified

Section 8

Data Protection Act Implications

There are no identified implications in respect of the Data Protection Act arising from this report.

Section 9

Risk Management Implications

A failure to produce Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans would run the risk of the Council not meeting its duty to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation or enhancement of these areas under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The subsequent degrading of the District's historic assets would damage economic and environmental wellbeing.

Section 10

Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no identified implications in the report.

Section 11

List of Background Papers

Draft Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

Draft Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area Appraisal

Draft Generic Conservation Area Management Plan SPD

Draft Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan SPD

Draft Brereton Conservation Area Management Plan SPD

Section 12

Report History

None relevant

Annexes to Report:

1. Draft Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal
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Conservation Area Appraisal **Rugeley Town Centre**

1. Introduction

This document seeks to provide a clear definition of the special architectural or historic interest that warranted designation of Rugeley town centre as a Conservation Area through a written appraisal of its character and appearance – what matters and why. It is intended as a guide upon which to base the form and style of future development in the area as it continues to evolve. An Appraisal was produced for Rugeley following Conservation Area designation in 1973, and updated in 2000. The current document again updates its predecessors, making use of some information contained therein.

Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in December 1973 and covers the historic core of this market town. Its boundary is shown on Plan 1. Rugeley stands between Lichfield and Stafford on the south bank of the River Trent on ground rising from the valley to the forest and heath of Cannock Chase. The Rising Brook flows down from the Chase through the centre of the town. The town was first documented at the time of the Domesday Survey, and its development has focussed on the main Lichfield-Stafford road along Horsefair, Upper and Lower Brook Street and Market Street. Rugeley's prosperity has been based on its mining and industrial history with water power an important asset and its first market charter dating from 1259. The Trent and Mersey Canal (formerly Grand Trunk Canal) to the east of the town opened in 1777 and provided the means of bulk transport of goods. Coal, power and electronics dominated during the 20th century and today's built environment continues to provide evidence of this development with the cooling towers of Rugeley power station featuring in town centre views.

The Conservation Area comprises Upper and Lower Brook Street and part of Market Street together with Brook Square and Market Square. Also parts of Brewery Street, Bow Street, Albion Street and Anson Street which lead off the main streets. The informal street pattern contrasts the open spaces with narrow winding streets and passages and affords a variety of views. It is accentuated and complemented by the diversity of building types which frame it, this diversity being generally harmonised by their continuity and appropriate mass, height, scale and materials.

There are seven listed buildings in the Conservation Area, all Grade II: two public houses, the 17th Century timber framed Red Lion and the early 19th Century Shrew (formerly Shrewsbury Arms Hotel); the 19th Century 31/33 Market Square, Brook House, 17 and 19 Lower Brook Street and 16-18 Lower Brook Street, plus other buildings of historic and visual interest which contribute to the setting of these listed buildings, mainly from the 19th and early 20th Century. Traffic was removed from the town centre in the 1980's. Shops form the predominant use at ground floor level, together with banks, estate agents and pubs, cafes and hot food shops. Upper floors, where in use, are mainly storage, offices or flats.

Summary of Special Interest of Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area:

- Its long history still evident in its layout and buildings

- Its traditional street pattern of a tightly built up pedestrian town along a winding main street
- Its mixed small scale retail/commercial uses and markets
- Its townscape of diverse building types and buildings/groups of individual interest, harmonised by mass, height, scale and materials
- Its human scale, with visual interest created by irregular frontages, rooflines and design details

The survey work for this Appraisal was carried out in 2009.

2. Planning Policy Context

Government policy recognises the importance of effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment through legislation and policy guidance. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) provides a full statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other features, and complements the guidance given in PPG16: Archaeology and Planning (1990). PPS15 will supercede PPG 15 and 16 in due course.

The Government is responsible for compiling a List of buildings of special architectural or historic interest of national significance. There are three grades of listed buildings to give an indication of relative importance, Grade I, II* and II; 94% of listed buildings are Grade II.

The Local Authority is responsible for designation of conservation areas where appropriate, and for formulating and publishing proposals for the preservation or enhancement of these areas. A conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The effect of designation is broadly to bring demolition of buildings and work to trees under planning control and to restrict ‘permitted development’ rights which permit certain works to take place.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (2004) sets out a framework of policies seeking to protect and enhance the historic environment. It highlights the need to identify, conserve and enhance the region’s diverse historic environment and manage change in such a way that respects local character and distinctiveness. The distinctiveness of a place may derive from more than its appearance, its buildings and the spaces between them, and include historical associations and the local environment. Defining character or special interest includes understanding and assessing the value of the area, both in its parts and as a whole.

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 explains the planning strategy within the County, including broad policies to preserve and enhance the special character, appearance and interest of conservation areas. It states that any new development within or adjacent to a conservation area should protect its special qualities and respect the scale, height and form of older buildings.

Cannock Chase Local Plan 1997 contains detailed policies B1, B2, B3, B4 and B5 relating to listed buildings, archaeology and new development in and adjacent to conservation areas, and C15 protecting trees. The Local Development Framework will supersede the Local Plan in due course, but at present the existing policies are retained.

This Conservation Area Appraisal is a background document to the Local Development Framework, identified as such in the Local Development Scheme 2008. It has the status of a material planning consideration providing a basis for development control decisions.

3. Development History

The name 'Rugeley' is thought to derive from the Old English 'hrycg' and 'leah' referring to a clearing on a ridge. The settlement was owned by the Earls of Mercia until 1069 when the last Earl, Edwin, son of Aelfgar of Rugeley, forfeited it to the Crown. In 1189 it was granted to the Bishop of Lichfield and it descended with the Bishop until it passed to the Paget family in 1546.

The woods, ironstone, coal and clay in the area, together with available water power, led to the town becoming an industrial settlement. There was a mill in the town, some meadow along the Trent and woodland on Cannock Chase at the time of the Domesday Survey in Rugeley in 1086, with tanneries present by the 12th century and mills and forges along the Rising Brook from the Middle Ages. In 1086 there was a mill worth 30 shillings in the Manor and by 1423 a fulling mill (for making cloth) belonging to the Lord of the Manor, believed to be the 'walkmill' on the pool (now drained) downstream from Horns Pool near Slitting Mill, on the edge of the Chase to the west. By 1560 there was a further mill leased by the Lord of the Manor. There were iron mines and a forge within the Manor by 1298 and in 1380 there were 17 workers in iron. In 1682 there was a forge near Slitting Mill and between 1692 and 1710 a slitting mill (for working the forged iron) at Rugeley was handling most of the output of Staffordshire's ironworks. There was also a forge in the centre of Rugeley around 1775 and by 1834 two forges, rolling mills and two iron foundries. By 1851 there were a large sheet iron and tin plate mill and two foundries in the town. In addition there was a diverse base of other industries including felt hat making, brewing, tanning, a chemical works and a brass foundry. Rugeley was prominent in the Midlands iron industry from the Middle Ages to Elizabethan times, and again in the Industrial Revolution at the end of the 18th Century. At the same time agriculture formed an important activity and in the Middle Ages the town was surrounded by three common fields – Churchfield, Upfield and Hodgeley – which would have given the town a spacious aspect. Early coal mining activity led to prospecting for coal at deeper levels between 1791 and 1794 and generated the social and economic development of the area from the mid 19th Century, eventually becoming the district's major industry.

Rugeley was of sufficient importance by 1259 that the King granted a charter for a Thursday market to the Bishop of Lichfield and an annual fair of three days to be held on the Vigil, Feast and Morrow of St Augustine of Canterbury (25-27 May).

By 1747 there were two fairs a year for saddle horses and cattle and by 1834 this had increased to four. Rugeley's annual horse fair was famous throughout the Midlands, with horses being brought in from all parts of the country and Ireland for sale during the 18th and 19th Century, and tethered along Horse Fair, at a time when horse power was supreme. By 1868 a general market was being held on a Saturday as well. Market status assured the progress of the town in relation to neighbouring settlements.

A rental survey of 1570 carried out for the Paget family is well detailed and shows something of the layout of the town. It refers to 'the way at the high crosse' which presumably stood in the market square and the 'way' seems to be Bow Street. In the market square there is reference to the Court House which possibly stood in the middle of the square, as its successor the market hall did until the 19th Century. Lower Brook Street crossed the water twice (the Rising Brook and probably the trail race of the mill to which 'mille lane' led). Upper and Lower Brook Street remained divided by water with a ford and then a bridge crossing. A mill orchard is mentioned and so are two forges, probably water powered, lying on a half acre plot near the Windmyll House. Along the Rising Brook corridor there were three mills and two forges, the latter lying in the north east 'industrial quarter' of the town with one of the mills, a tannery and perhaps a windmill. The importance of the Brook in the town's early history is fundamental. The town plan of the 16th C thus consisted of one main axis running down the high street with two branches along the 'wood end lane' (Sheepfair) to the Chase and along 'Newbolde End' (Horse Fair) towards Brereton and Longdon.

Until the mid 17th C pack horse trains had formed the primary means of transport of goods, but from the mid 17th C stagecoach services developed between settlements, travel increased and places such as Lichfield were transformed into bustling cities with prominent business people and scholars, with waves of prosperity benefiting smaller settlements such as Rugeley and Brereton. The town was on a coaching route to London, Liverpool and Chester and inns expanded to serve the new trade. The Canal was cut along the eastern edge of the town in 1777 which brought further prosperity through improved transport facilities, warehouses and wharves.

In 1649 and 1709 two fires swept through Rugeley destroying property, however an account of the town from about 1829 describes its neat appearance, well built houses and recent new streets 'this little town is fast advancing into notice and its prosperity is considerable enhanced by its great thoroughfare situation and the advantages of inland navigation that it enjoys'. The first mention of a church was in 1189. This was extended and then replaced with a new St Augustine's Church in 1822, due to the state of the much altered old one which had become too small for the growing town. The church is at the northern extremity of the town, close to the sites of other historic buildings – Rugeley Grammar School dating from 1567 and the medieval tithe barn which stood until 1649. This area is outside the Town Centre Conservation Area, separated from it today by more modern development. Increased population and prosperity led to new development and redevelopment during the 18th and 19th Century, and Rugeley developed from a busy market town to a busy industrial one. The tithe plan of the town in 1840 suggests that in its basic elements the layout of the town was little changed since 1570. It was however in the process

of being developed with additional streets being laid out and well developed plots along all the main thoroughfares, and seems to have grown apace in the mid-19th Century. Anson Street was laid out in 1878 as the west side of the town centre was developed, and named after the Anson family of Shugborough. A wide range of trades served the local community in the early 19th Century including blacksmiths, basketmakers, shoe makers, grocers, butchers, drapers, a tea dealer and confectioner, and small breweries grew up around the town.

The railway was constructed in 1859 to carry Cannock's coal to the Trent Valley and connected Rugeley with Walsall, Wolverhampton and Birmingham. The industrialisation of the town continued through to the 20th C. In the 1950's and 60's there was a large amount of redevelopment and demolition in the town, mainly through housing clearance policies or road improvements, with cottages, shops, inns and townhouses lost. Traffic was removed from the town centre in the 1970's and new development filled some of the gaps in the drive to 'modernise' and enhance shopping facilities. New roads and opening up of building frontages around the perimeter of the town centre core enabled new service areas to be created at the rear of properties on Upper and Lower Brook Street and Market Street.

The houses of several prominent families stood in the countryside within a few miles of Rugeley: Beaudesert Hall, the seat of the Pagets, Wolseley Hall, the seat of the Wolseley family and Hagley Hall, built by Sir Richard Weston in 1636, all now demolished. Shugborough Hall, home of the Anson family, remains a few miles to the north. Their presence would have resulted in benefits and status to the community through its history.

The County's Historic Environment Record indicates areas of potential importance in increasing knowledge of the history of the town. Archaeology may exist anywhere within the boundaries of historic towns and has the potential to help understand origins, development and growth, therefore any development proposals involving the disturbance of ground within the Conservation Area will need to be accompanied by an archaeological assessment as part of a Heritage Statement to accompany the planning application.

Through most of its history Rugeley has been a well-favoured small town, however the changes over the last 30 years, particularly the rapid loss of its main economic base, have had a significant impact in common with other coalfield communities. After a long and relatively prosperous history the town today is a quieter place, notwithstanding its strong community spirit, with most of its industries and activity having ceased and evidence of its past living on in its distinctive street layout and older buildings, street and place names, markets and the continuing presence of the Rising Brook. The Canal to the east of the town remains a valuable asset with its modern role as a leisure facility.

4. Townscape Character Appraisal

Location and Landscape Setting

Rugeley stands on the south bank of the River Trent on ground gently rising from the valley to the forest and heath of Cannock Chase to the west. The Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1958 and covers an area of approximately 6,900 hectares. Its primary purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, and this higher ground forms a green setting to the town. The Rising Brook flows down from the Chase to the Trent through Elmore Park and the centre of the town. Rugeley lies roughly halfway between the County town of Stafford and the cathedral city of Lichfield, and historically most of its buildings have been concentrated along the north-east south-west axis of the Stafford-Lichfield road. The Trent and Mersey Canal (itself a county-wide Conservation Area) runs along the eastern edge of the town, beyond which stands Rugeley Power Station with its landmark cooling towers, and further east run the River Trent and West Coast mainline railway. Waterways and routeways follow the contours between the Chase and the River, features which have determined the historic layout of the town.

Spatial analysis

The town centre is physically compact comprising a curving informal linear street pattern of one main route with side streets and passages off, the main route opening into the irregularly shaped spaces of Brook Square and Market Square. The streets are enclosed by building frontages of two and three storey height and varying plot width, design, period and materials. The town has grown up with buildings side by side along the main street frontages, a pattern retained today. The scale is essentially related to the pedestrian rather than the car. The southernmost open space is Brook Square, through which the Brook once flowed, being of an informal triangular shape; the northernmost is Market Square, a spacious rectangular shaped area and the primary open space in the town centre, bounded by larger scale buildings including the landmark feature of the Clock Tower. Both open spaces form focal points within the inward looking town centre, allowing wider views, in contrast to the adjacent narrow streets where views are directed between buildings, revealing different streetscapes unfolding as the pedestrian progresses. The street market takes place in Market Square on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays whereas Brook Square provides a quieter meeting place and seating area.

The war memorial has recently been moved from Brook Square back to a position in Anson Street near to where it stood prior to the 1970's, giving more space for Remembrance Day parades and creating a new focal point. Green space and tree planting within the Conservation Area is limited mainly to the Squares, along Rising Brook and in the more spacious, straight and formally laid out Anson Street. Views into the town centre along side streets to diverse buildings and spaces create visual interest, and views out focus on trees or landmark buildings beyond the Conservation Area boundary. These are however often separated from it by an expanse of modern car parks and service areas which have taken the place of the historic hinterland of houses, cottages and such buildings as a mill, brewery, smithy and cattle pens.

Character Analysis

Townscape is the feature which distinguishes the special interest of a Conservation Area from the merits of individual buildings within it, including the inter relationship

between buildings and spaces. It derives from appearance, history and historical association, and its nature and quality may vary within the area. Examples are noted to illustrate features and are not intended to be comprehensive.

The townscape of Rugeley town centre is defined by its informal street pattern complemented by the diversity of building types with which it is lined, this diversity being generally harmonised by their continuity and appropriate mass, height, scale and materials in relation to one another. High brick walls fill one or two historic gaps in frontages. At ground floor level the predominant use is shopping, with a range of complementary uses including banks and buildings societies, estate agents, restaurants, cafes and pubs. Also within the Conservation Area are the town library, police station, a printers and some residential property. Above ground floor level the predominant use appears to be storage or vacant floorspace, with some offices, flats and a health and fitness club. On the whole the upper floors do not appear well used. The remains of the Anglican parish church of St Augustine, its early 19th Century successor and the Roman Catholic Church of St Joseph and Etheldreda are important to the setting of this Conservation Area, and are included in other Conservation Areas.

Much of the Conservation Area appears to date from the 19th and early 20th Century, though some buildings may have earlier cores and often retain part, if not all, of their original plot to the rear, though in many cases with modern rear extensions and additions. There are remnants of old brick boundary walling at the rear of 21 Upper Brook Street, 19 Lower Brook Street, 16-18 Lower Brook Street and The Pig and Bell, Market Street. There are two storey rear outbuildings which may have once been workshops at the rear of the (former) Cabin Inn and the rear of 11 Upper Brook Street. There is a considerable amount of modern infill of lengths of the frontages, including buildings with large footprint and correspondingly long shopfront, the design and materials of which are not all as sympathetic as they might be, though in general the modern infill maintains historic building lines or stands behind them and could be considered of neutral impact.

Rooflines in the Conservation Area are of varying two and three storey height, and there are some dormer windows, chimneys with pots and decorative finials which provide additional visual interest. Roofs of older buildings are generally pitched with roof slopes facing the road frontages. Roofs of modern infill are often flat and introduce an alien appearance, though their scale and materials attempt to reflect their surroundings.

Walking through the town centre from south to north, one passes from Horse Fair through the narrow confines of Upper Brook Street into the triangular shaped Brook Square, on through the narrow entrance to Lower Brook Street eventually emerging in the relatively open vista of Market Square. Market Street then leads on northwards towards St Augustine's Church in its green churchyard, whilst Anson Street runs north-west towards the Police Station. The Horse Fair frontage is not included within the Conservation Area, as few of its buildings contribute positively to the street scene and it is now dominated by a steady flow of traffic. The main buildings of interest which lie on the opposite side of the road are the listed timber framed cottages at 16, 18 and 20 Horse Fair, probably dating from the 16th Century.

However they stand amongst 19th and 20th Century buildings of variable quality and are somewhat isolated from the Conservation Area. Further along Horse Fair the frontage of more traditional buildings of merit are included within the boundary of Talbot Street/ Lichfield Street Conservation Area.

Upper Brook Street is a narrow gently curving street mainly containing small shops and two historic pubs, The Globe and The Crown. The Globe, at the junction with Horse Fair, creates a welcoming prominent entrance to the town centre and Conservation Area, in red brick with a slate roof, though its former corner entrance door has been blocked. It faces the busy modern road junction with tree planting and street furniture creating a gateway feature at the entrance to the pedestrianised town, and sets the scene for the walk in. The Crown nearby retains its Victorian frontage and rich detailing including its stone name plaque at first floor level: 'Crown Hotel Butler and Co. Famous Ales Wolverhampton', harking back to its historic past. There are several traditional shopfronts and some decorative detailing on frontages along this part of the street including the sliding sash windows at first and second floor and the decorative eaves at 10-12 Upper Brook Street. Other buildings, though not of special significance, nonetheless provide a historic group of positive value in the streetscene. The buildings are a mixture of styles and dates constructed in red brick with tiled roofs. The frontages and rooflines are extremely irregular, with nos. 19-23 set back, forming a small recess. The close grouping of buildings in the street means that views are inward looking and are restricted at the northern end by the red brick Victorian façade of nos. 3-5 Brook Square (the building behind is modern). This long facade, 3 storeys high, with its arched windows at first floor, paired windows above and decorative eaves, is a dominant element in Brook Square, providing a visual foil to the lower development. The frontage of 3-5 is curved and serves to direct views around the corner and on down Lower Brook Street.

As Horse Fair is left behind the traffic noise reduces until the sound of footsteps and voices become predominant within the quiet central area of the Conservation Area, and the Clock Tower chimes the hours. The sound of an occasional vehicle or air conditioning unit can be heard, until traffic noise rises again beyond Market Square.

Brook Square is an area of public open space of human scale enhanced by its mature tree planting which extends along the adjacent open length of Rising Brook with its boardwalk access beside Brook House. The trees create a strong positive injection of soft greenery into the otherwise hard urban landscape of buildings and paving. The trees have both visual and environmental value, in winter the branch structure of the deciduous trees continues to add visual variety. Conservation Area designation places protection over all trees, and some trees which make a particular contribution have the added protection of Tree Preservation Orders. Whilst no trees within the Conservation Area are covered by TPO, the Horse Chestnut in Brewery Street just outside the Conservation Area is protected in this way and makes a good positive contribution to the view along the street towards the spire of Sts Joseph and Etheldreda's Church and the Power Station. Brook House faces the Square and is a listed early 19th century building in use as offices. It presents an attractive, well-kept frontage with its elegant sash windows and moulded stucco doorcase. A passageway between modern buildings to the south-east of the Square leads past the front of the Benhill Press, a 19th century printing works set back from the main

shopping frontage in an unobtrusive position, but a valuable link to the town's history. The pedestrian route westwards from the square leads past modern shops to the Market Hall, a bulky modern building with rooftop parking, and on to the bus station, (both just outside the Conservation Area) from where there are views of mature trees and green vegetation in Elmore Park beyond. The Rising Brook is culverted as it leaves the Park beneath the road, Market and Brook Square, but a change in the colour and pattern of the block paving denote its route. It emerges again for a short way by the boardwalk, then returns to its culvert on its route north-east.

The narrow entrance into **Lower Brook Street** from Brook Square is emphasised by the gentle curve of the road and the frontage of two and three storey buildings. At the junction of Bees Lane the former bank, now a shop, at 16-18 Lower Brook Street is a listed stuccoed mid 19th Century building with an attractive frontage, heavily rusticated at the lower storey with sash windows and a moulded doorcase. Already there are distant views of the trees and clock tower in Market Square. Opposite are 17 and 19 Lower Brook Street, also listed, and both early 19th Century 3 storey buildings with stuccoed elevations. No. 17 has a well detailed and rather extravagant façade in Regency style with coupled Ionic fluted pilasters over the upper storeys. Other attractive historic buildings make a positive contribution to the streetscene including no. 6, a three storey red brick building with decorative hood moulds around upper floor windows and ornate moulded cornice at the eaves, typical Victorian detailing; and 21/21a/23, retaining handsome first floor sliding sash windows and having pitched roofed front dormers, which add variety at roof level. A number of modern shopfronts have been introduced along this street, some more successful than others in their window size and fascia signage. As in Upper Brook Street the buildings here are small in scale, some in red brick and others rendered in a variety of finishes and light colours. Walking along the street views of the clock tower in the Square, a strong landmark building and part of the town's identity, gradually open up, first above the roof tops then between the trees in the Square.

The Market Square in Rugeley (formerly known as Market Place), although not large, does provide a distinct contrast to the rest of the town centre not only through being relatively more spacious but also because some of the buildings are larger in scale. It is the only concentration of three storey buildings in the town centre, giving strong vertical emphasis around the open space. This is particularly true of the Clock Tower and the group of three red brick three storey buildings to the north of the square at the corner of Anson Street and Market Street. The tower dates from 1879 and is built of red brick with Bath stone dressings and is a highly ornamental version of mid-Victorian Gothic. Its ironwork was made at a local foundry and it displays a plaque commemorating the town's first public water supply in 1895. It is the only remaining element of the town hall complex, now redeveloped with housing. Beside the clock tower a row of unlisted three storey 19th Century buildings create an attractive group, continuing round into Bow Street, beyond a passage way between the buildings. The south west side of Market Square is contained by a frontage of elegant three storey Victorian town houses and a pub, with varied roof lines and materials, some having distinctive dormer window treatment and retaining timber sliding sash windows above ground floor level. At the south-east corner of Market Square nos. 31-33, the former home of the Landor family and now a bank with shop

adjoining, is another of Rugeley's listed buildings. It has a late 18th century appearance but with an earlier 17th century core. Its splendid stuccoed Tuscan pilaster doorcase with curved pediment and tryglyphs on the frieze, sash windows and other careful detailing shows something of the quality of workmanship and prosperity of the town at that time, features to be valued.

On market days the red and white striped awnings of the market stalls introduce a lively sense of the activity and purpose characteristic of this old market town. Mature trees reintroduce a soft green element in Market Square and Anson Street at the north end of the Conservation Area, with further trees beyond including a yew in Market Street beside the Red Lion.

At the southern end of **Market Street** adjoining the Market Square the 18th Century Shrew, formerly the Shrewsbury Arms Hotel and before that the Talbot Hotel, also listed, occupies a position of prominence. The building was significantly remodelled in the 19th century, the existing frontage being attributable to this period with a stucco finish, sash windows and an advanced heavily rusticated entrance. Modern buildings adjoin on both sides. Two further pubs are located in Market Street – The Pig and Bell and, further along as the road turns, the listed 17th Century timber framed Red Lion at the northern extremity of the Conservation Area. The latter dates from around 1600 though has been altered over time with early 19th Century segmental headed windows and two simple moulded wood doorcases, and a rebuilt front in modern brick, but still retains the small scale simple presence of a local inn. The building is now somewhat isolated between two car parks, though at one time there were houses and cottages adjacent, demolished during the 20th Century. Market Street becomes a vehicular highway just south of the Red Lion and the environment deteriorates with on-street parking. In the distance a further pair of listed timber framed cottages are visible at the junction of Market Street and Bryans Lane on the way to St Augustine's Church, as the commerce of the town centre gives way to its residential surroundings and traffic once again begins to dominate.

From Market Square, several side streets lead away from the town centre, **Albion Street and Bow Street** to east and west, and the later addition of **Anson Street**. Albion Street leads out of the Conservation Area straight between 19th Century frontages of progressively smaller buildings, mostly built of red brick, in use as shops and houses with another small traditional pub halfway along, The Albion. Several of these properties retain original detailing, probably not subject to such pressures for change over time as are the main streets. Bow Street turns and leads out of the Conservation Area, as the building heights reduce to two storey once more, and no.2 retains its timber Victorian shopfront, though the rest of its façade has been much altered. Red brick and light coloured renders continue the characteristic theme. Anson Street, laid out later than the other streets, is wide and straight with a spacious feel, enclosed by substantial two and three storey Victorian and Edwardian buildings on the north side and modern buildings on the south. The Library, part way along, is an impressive large scale two storey building with dormer windows, a central triangular pediment doorcase emphasized by a flight of steps, timber sliding sash windows and dentilled eaves. Nos. 8 and 10, a pair of three storey Victorian buildings in red brick with decorative blue banding and stone heads and cills to the timber sliding sash windows to the upper floors, add visual interest to the group. No.

8 has a well maintained traditional timber shopfront. The Police Station closes the view at the edge of the Conservation Area as Anson Street regains its vehicular traffic and runs on northwards out of the Conservation Area between frontages of Victorian villas and 1930's housing.

The evening economy in Rugeley is served by a relatively small number of licensed premises, mainly around the edge of the town centre, attracting the relatively few, mainly younger, drinkers. One or two restaurants, together with the nearby Rugeley Rose, exist on the periphery but overall there are few attractors to generate any significant evening activity in the Conservation Area.

Building materials

The building materials which characterise the Conservation Area are dark orange-red brick, cream/white 'Stucco' and painted render/brick. Brick predominates, and the majority of the historic buildings are built in Flemish bond – alternate 'headers' and 'stretchers' on each course. This is a decorative bond introduced in the 17th century for more important buildings and by the 18th century was used increasingly for smaller buildings. Its greater economy in the use of brick (the proportion of 'stretchers' is greater) made this bond popular. Staffordshire is well endowed with clay suitable for brick and tile making, and local brickyards operated into the 20th century. 'Stucco' is a plastered finish, used historically instead of stone, and was considered more fashionable than brickwork. Stone detailing to window and door heads and cills adds to the characteristic range of building materials. The modern buildings are built in Stretcher bond, widely used today for the construction of cavity walls, where all the bricks are 'stretchers', except for a 'header' in alternate courses at the quoin.

Traditional roof coverings in the Conservation Area include red and blue clay tiles and blue slate. Such materials give a texture and liveliness not found in artificial materials and are to be valued. There is variety of roofscape throughout the area with varied rooflines, gables and dormer windows, dentilled eaves (decorative 'tooth like' blocks under the eaves) in both brick and plaster and a variety of clay chimney pots on top of chunky brick chimneys. 5/5a Bow Street and 10-12 Upper Brook Street have attractive first floor bay windows, and throughout the area there is a tremendous variety of traditional window design. Some shops retain their retractable awnings/canopies, such as 8 Anson Street, and some of the modern shop units also display such features. Some remnants of cast iron rainwater goods remain.

The public realm

The ground surfaces in the Conservation Area were the subject of a repaving scheme in the 1980's. The scheme sought to maintain the traditional indication of former footway and carriageway prior to pedestrianisation through the use of different materials or delineation of kerb position, which avoids a 'wall to wall' carpet effect of brick paviours. In Market Street, Market Square, Anson Street, Bow Street and the entrance to Albion Street at the north end of the town centre the former footways are paved in traditional irregular buff stone flags, with mainly red/blue brick paviours and blocks used elsewhere. The north end of Market Street is used by vehicles and the

surfacing returns to tarmac (complete with double yellow lines which are quite visually intrusive), however outside the entrance to the Red Lion are the remains of granite kerbs and setts. Elsewhere off Brook Square a modern timber boardwalk runs along Rising Brook.

Street furniture comprises a coordinated series of main elements painted in a dark green colour scheme: traditional cast iron lampposts topped with lantern style lamps in the larger spaces and modern lamps high on building facades in the narrow streets; bollards, street signs, fingerposts and bins; poles to support hanging baskets and CCTV cameras painted either green or black; notice boards including the recently introduced attractive timber Chase Heritage Trail information boards in Market Square; and public art comprising a decorative ironwork gateway feature at the south end of Upper Brook Street. There are low red/blue brick built planters in Brook Square, with bedding schemes introducing colour, and taller stone planters in Market Square containing trees, shrubs and bedding. There is also an assortment of modern utility cabinets, telephone kiosks and a recycling node concentrated around Brook Square, Market Square and the entrance to Bees Lane, creating a certain amount of clutter.

Shopfronts and signs

Shopfronts have an important role to play in the appearance of the town centre because they are designed to display goods for sale and attract attention. There are some good examples of shopfront design in Rugeley which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area including 21 Lower Brook Street, 20 Upper Brook Street, 8 Anson Street and 2 Bow Street. These are of traditional style, though some are modern, and achieve a satisfactory relationship between the shopfront and building as a whole. Timber shopfronts are usually more appropriate for properties built prior to 1914.

Fascia and projecting signs also have a major effect on the quality of the street scene and their size, scale, materials and method of any illumination should complement the building on which they are set, as well as their surroundings. Good examples of sympathetic signage are on 21 Lower Brook Street, 8 Anson Street, 20 Upper Brook Street, 4 Albion Street and 25a Market Square.

The setting of the Conservation Area

Historically buildings surrounded the town centre core, however today a significant part of the setting of the Conservation Area accommodates car parking and service areas, plus some larger, modern buildings. Although necessary to the functioning of the town centre their visual impact is significantly adverse, the larger buildings are not well related in scale and materials and the open areas isolate the core from the rest of the town. The surrounding busy roads with limited pedestrian crossing points compound this effect.

Plans 3 and 4 show important features of the Conservation Area.

An extract from the previous Appraisal from 2000 which describes buildings of interest in more detail though the area is attached as an Appendix to this Appraisal.

5. Loss/Intrusion/Negative features

The character and appearance of a Conservation Area can easily be eroded as a result of unsympathetic alterations and development and the decay or removal of characteristic features. Most of the existing modern development in and adjacent to the Conservation Area was built prior to designation. Modern development, though 'of its time' is not always sympathetic to character and appearance, but conversely copying 'historic' architecture may not be the best solution. Through careful design new buildings can respect, complement and enhance the architectural character of an area. Fine buildings of any type, style and age can enhance the visual environment and contribute to a sense of community.

The cumulative effect of many minor alterations to individual properties can also have a negative effect. Special architectural interest is very vulnerable to the process of modernisation. Examples are replacement shopfronts and upper floor windows in artificial materials and non-traditional designs. Such details tend to be bland and lacking in the rich textures and colours of natural materials, and the result can be loss of diversity and subtlety, affecting character and appearance. The recovering of roofs, removal of chimney stacks and other architectural details such as decorative ridge tiles can have a similar impact. Although many old shopfronts have been replaced with modern alternatives, efforts have been made for many years to secure appropriate design and materials for shopfronts and signs, however lack of maintenance together with unsympathetic signage erected under deemed advertisement consent has in some cases resulted in deterioration of the appearance of the town centre. Modern infill development occupies significant lengths of street frontage in some locations, such as around Brook Square, but generally this has sought to reflect the character of the Conservation Area in one way or another, although it offers limited architectural interest. The addition of large buildings, for example supermarkets and an indoor market hall, do make a contribution economically to the functioning of the town centre, however their appearance and siting need careful design to retain the human scale of their context and frontage alignments.

The loss or decay of distinctive local features, such as those noted in this Appraisal, can also detract from special architectural and historic interest. Remaining features often tend to be the remnants of what once existed in the area. Bearing in mind that these are the very features which helped to create the distinctive character and appearance in the first place, their vulnerability is evident. The upgrading of property does not have to be at the expense of historic fabric and character, conversely retention of appropriate detailing reinforces special interest. The Conservation Area is fortunate in retaining a high proportion of detailing on its historic buildings above ground floor level, however a significant number of these are suffering from longstanding lack of maintenance. The historic fabric appears to be slowly deteriorating leading to pressure for replacement rather than conservation and repair of elements such as window frames and architectural details, some of

which is taking place without any consent, in modern materials, resulting in incremental detriment to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area over time. Keeping historic buildings in use is the key to keeping them in a good state of repair, however some of the existing uses are of low economic value.

In the public realm, existing paving and street furniture is looking ‘tired’, and in places uneven and inconsistent, and would benefit from refurbishment. A well designed update of Market Square and Brook Square, with more high quality landscaping would enhance the town centre as an attractive destination, with resulting economic benefits. The incremental addition of utility cabinets, signs and a now redundant telephone box with other ‘clutter’ scattered on an ad hoc basis around any space large enough to accommodate it is also having a detrimental visual impact.

The setting of the Conservation Area is in need of enhancement including improved pedestrian links with the rest of the town, particularly with the Canal and Park, which have potential to positively enhance the town centre, and with surrounding residential areas. The extensive open parking and servicing, though fulfilling a function, isolates the town centre core from its surroundings.

The Conservation Area was placed on the English Heritage ‘At Risk’ Register in 2009 as a result of the deterioration of building fabric and public realm areas over recent years together with underlying economic decline resulting in empty shop units and loss of vitality. Consideration of how best to deal with future change in Rugeley to aid the town’s regeneration and benefit the local economy whilst enhancing its special architectural and historic qualities is being given through the preparation of an Area Action Plan. Public consultation has been carried out on ‘Issues and Options’, and ‘Preferred Options’ and the final document will be published in due course. It will incorporate some detailed urban design guidance. In addition a Management Plan is in preparation following from this Appraisal which will seek to address the detailed issues raised.

6. Community Involvement

A report will be taken to the Council’s Cabinet seeking approval for consultation on this Draft Appraisal document. Occupiers of all properties in the Conservation Area, local ward councillors, Rugeley Town Council, The Landor Society and technical consultees will receive publicity about the Document, inviting comments. A copy will be published on the Council’s website www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk At the end of the consultation period representations received and proposed changes to the draft in the light of those representations will be reported back to the Council’s Cabinet. The Council will then adopt the amended Appraisal.

7. Boundaries

The boundary of the Conservation area follows the rear boundaries of properties which have frontages to the streets within the town centre core. The boundary has been reviewed during preparation of this Appraisal and no change is considered necessary at this time.

8. Enhancement Opportunities/Recommendations for Management/Planning Policy Guidance

A specific responsibility is placed upon Local Planning Authorities to take account of the character of a Conservation Area when exercising their duties. The local distinctiveness of particular areas is greatly to be valued and needs to be reinforced in order to maintain diversity, attractiveness and historic continuity. Unless or until financial support is available as grants for building works or environmental enhancements the main opportunities for enhancement of the Conservation Area are through the Development Control process. This Appraisal makes recommendations on what it is desirable to preserve, and how, and sets out broad principles for enhancement which may be further developed within a Management Plan for the Conservation Area:

Recommendation 1: Consideration of planning applications will be informed by the detailed descriptions of character contained in this Appraisal, particularly the features of interest and the areas which would benefit from improvement. There will be a general presumption in favour of preserving buildings and features identified in this Appraisal as making a positive contribution to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Recommendation 2 : Proposals affecting the Conservation Area must be advertised and account taken of representations in determining each case.

Recommendation 3: Future development should take account of the special interest of the area as set out in the Appraisal. New development will need to acknowledge the relationship of buildings to spaces and reflect existing architectural detailing, including colour, texture and range of materials. It should also respect existing trees. Any opportunities for enhancement of areas highlighted as having a negative visual impact or allowing refurbishment of the exterior of buildings would be welcomed.

Recommendation 4: Traditional materials should be used in all building repair works and both hard and soft landscape elements treated sensitively:

- Where repair works fall within planning control the use of traditional materials for routine repairs will be required, and elsewhere encouraged.
- The repair/retention of original chimney stacks and pots, ridge tiles and other architectural details will be encouraged.
- Re-roofing should use traditional tiles or slates rather than artificial substitutes. Where necessary, window replacement should match the original design and glazing pattern. Timber doorcases should be retained and repaired. Repair and maintenance of upper floors should be included in any scheme of alteration or improvement of the ground floor shopfront.

Recommendation 5: New shopfronts and signs should take account of the special interest of the area as set out in the Appraisal:

- New shopfronts or advertisements should not remove or cover existing architectural features or details such as decorative string courses. Where there are traditional shopfronts which complement a building and contribute to the character of the Conservation Area there will be a general presumption against their removal.
- New shopfronts or advertisements should complement the style, scale and proportion of the building in order to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Recommendation 6: Public realm improvements should include a consistent approach to street furniture and reduction of clutter, with the inclusion of appropriate and suitably sited trees. Environmental improvements in key locations will be sought.

Recommendation 7: Opportunities to enhance the setting of the Conservation Area, views in and out and pedestrian links between the town centre and surrounding areas including the Trent and Mersey Canal will be pursued.

Recommendation 8: The Council will undertake to work with property owners to seek satisfactory solution of issues adversely affecting the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

9. Useful Information

Further advice is available on the content of this Appraisal from the Planning Services Team, Cannock Chase Council, Civic Centre, PO Box 28, Beecroft Road, Cannock, Staffs WS11 1BG.

The principal sources of historic and local information referred to are:

- Rugeley Library Local Studies Section Clippings Files
- Joint Record Office, Lichfield (Rugeley Tithe Map 1840)
- Staffordshire County Council Historic Environment Record
- 'Looking Back on Rugeley' by Alec Neal, published by The Landor Society.
- Staffordshire County Council Conservation Area 51:Rugeley (1973)
- Cannock Chase Council Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (adopted 2000)

Proposed plans and photographs

Plan 1: Conservation Area boundary

Plan 2: Development History

Plan 3: Townscape Appraisal

Photographs to illustrate

Annex: part of previous Appraisal

Conservation Area Appraisal
Trent and Mersey Canal :
Cannock Chase District

1. Introduction

This document seeks to provide a clear definition of the special architectural or historic interest that warranted designation of the Trent and Mersey Canal as a Conservation Area through a written appraisal of its character and appearance – what matters and why. It is intended as a guide upon which to base the form and style of future development in the area as it continues to evolve.

The Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area was designated on 6th May 1988 by Staffordshire County Council in conjunction with the District Councils and runs throughout Staffordshire. The section running through Cannock Chase District is shown on Plan 1. The boundaries of the Conservation Area generally follow the boundaries of the Canal and its towpath, but extend in places to include adjacent buildings and groups of historic and architectural interest which are either linked historically or in character with the Canal. The Trent and Mersey Canal, completed in 1777, is of outstanding industrial archaeological importance, being the first of the major inland waterways which were to form the basis of the nation's principal transport and communications system in the late 18th and first half of the 19th centuries.

The Conservation Area comprises the waterway with adjacent Brindley Bank Pumping Station at the north of the District, follows the Canal southwards extending at intervals around the Anglican Old Chancel and St Augustine's Church in their churchyards and St Augustine's Field, runs to the east of Rugeley town centre including the former Canal warehouse and on again to the groups of cottages at The Mossley and Old Brewery Cottages in the south.

The waterway is in the ownership of British Waterways, a public body which exists to maintain and develop the canal and inland waterway network to fulfil its economic, social and environmental potential.

There are seven listed buildings in the Conservation Area: the Pumping Station and St Augustine's Church are Grade II*, the Old Chancel, with its churchyard cross and tombstone, the Viaduct and Canal bridge no. 64 are all grade II.

Summary of Special Interest of the Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area:

- Its long history as an inland waterway still evident in its winding linear layout following the contour and associated buildings and structures
- Its diverse building types and buildings/groups of individual interest
- Its predominantly quiet 'green' character with 'nodes' of activity at crossing/access points
- Its extensive tree cover with significant specimens and groups

The survey work for this Appraisal was carried out in 2009.

2. Planning Policy Context

Government policy recognises the importance of effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment through legislation and policy guidance. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) provides a full statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other features, and complements the guidance given in PPG16: Archaeology and Planning (1990). PPS15 will supercede PPG 15 and 16 in due course.

The Government is responsible for compiling a List of buildings of special architectural or historic interest of national significance. There are three grades of listed buildings to give an indication of relative importance, Grade I, II* and II; 94% of listed buildings are Grade II.

The Local Authority is responsible for designation of conservation areas where appropriate, and for formulating and publishing proposals for the preservation or enhancement of these areas. A conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The effect of designation is broadly to bring demolition of buildings and work to trees under planning control and to restrict ‘permitted development’ rights which permit certain works to take place.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (2004) sets out a framework of policies seeking to protect and enhance the historic environment. It highlights the need to identify, conserve and enhance the region’s diverse historic environment and manage change in such a way that respects local character and distinctiveness. The distinctiveness of a place may derive from more than its appearance, its buildings and the spaces between them, and include historical associations and the local environment. Defining character or special interest includes understanding and assessing the value of the area, both in its parts and as a whole.

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 explains the planning strategy within the County, including broad policies to preserve and enhance the special character, appearance and interest of conservation areas. It states that any new development within or adjacent to a conservation area should protect its special qualities and respect the scale, height and form of older buildings.

Cannock Chase Local Plan 1997 contains detailed policies B1, B2, B3, B4 and B5 relating to listed buildings, archaeology and new development in and adjacent to conservation areas, and C15 protecting trees. In relation to the canal Policy B4 (iii) aims to protect the character of the canal by ensuring appropriate development, Policy TR3 encourages recreation and tourism, and Proposal BP4 supports partnership working on environmental enhancement works. Since September 2007 the policies have been saved until they are replaced by policies in The Local Development Framework.

The Core Strategy Development Plan Document - Preferred Options Consultation (April 2009) contains policy areas on the Historic Environment, Attractive Town Centres and Delivering a sustainable Local Transport Network. These policies support enhancing the role of the canal through appropriate management and as a sustainable transport corridor.

This Conservation Area Appraisal is a background document to the Local Development Framework. It has the status of a material planning consideration providing a basis for development control decisions.

3. Development History

The Trent and Mersey Canal was built as a cross-country canal through the North Midlands and completed in 1777. It was engineered by James Brindley as part of his 'Grand Cross' plan to connect the principal rivers of England by linking the rivers Thames, Severn, Mersey and Humber by inland waterways. It runs for 93 miles from the Trent Navigation at Shardlow to the Bridgewater Canal at Preston Brook, and was also known as the Grand Trunk Canal. It makes connections with the Coventry Canal, Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal, the Shropshire Union Canal's Middlewich Branch, the Weaver Navigation, the Caldon, and the Hall Green Branch, which connects to the Macclesfield Canal.

The canal cost £300,000 to build but saved money and benefited the local economy as trips cost over two thirds less by canal compared to transport by road. Staffordshire had no navigable rivers for an alternative means of transport. The canal was important in the transportation of goods such as coal and pottery. It enabled smoother and quicker transport than the alternative rough roads. In Rugeley the coal mines were connected to the canal by tramways linked to wharves. By the 1860's the canal started to decline due to competition from the North Staffordshire Railway Company for commercial traffic. In 1948 the canal was nationalised and since 1963 has been under the control of British Waterways. Today it is leisure traffic that helps to maintain the canal as a functioning transport link.

North section: Brindley Bank Pumping Station/River Trent Aqueduct to Station Road (B5013) bridge

Brindley Bank Pumping station was built by the South Staffs Water Works Company in 1907. The pumping station is a II* listed building containing a 105' long steam pumping engine. It was most recently used as the South Staffs Water museum. A disused wharf that used to be connected to the pumping station by a tramway lies at the bottom of the 'Bloody Steps' below the pumping station and it is now a wide bend in the canal full of reeds. The 'Bloody Steps' that run down from the pumping station to the canal towpath at Brindley Bank were the scene of the murder of Christina Collins in 1839. As her body was pulled from the water her blood ran down the flight of steps and the spot is still rumoured to be haunted to this day. Her body was buried in the local graveyard and the boatman hanged.

Milepost 34 at Brindley Bank is a 1984 replacement for an original post. The Trent and Mersey Canal Society have reinstalled many lost mileposts. The original 1819 cast iron mileposts were made in Stone and assisted in the collection of tolls.

A group of old houses, including a canal side cottage with a datestone of 1841 sit near the Station Road bridge.

The remains of the old church of St Augustine are grade II listed and sit in a graveyard that abuts the canal. The Chancel and North Chapel are still in use while the rest of the building, including the tower, is in ruins.

Central section: Station Road (B5013) bridge to Love Lane railway viaduct

Rugeley's Parish Church of St Augustine of Canterbury, built 1822-23 with 1904 additions in a Perpendicular Gothic style, is a grade II* listed building that replaced the medieval Parish Church on the opposite side of Station Road. The church tower dominates the surrounding countryside. St Augustine's Field is a community owned playing field and open space run by a local charity that creates an important open green area between the canal and the town centre.

Milepost 33 is a 1984 replacement for an original post.

The old house and converted canal warehouses near Leathermill Lane bridge have been sensitively restored. The residential accommodation and traditional red brick Canal bridge form an attractive gateway to the town centre from the canal.

The derelict canal side mill, built in 1863, is a tall prominent 3 storey building that currently looks underused and in need of masonry repairs. It is named on the 1887 OS map as Trent and Mersey Mill, and the gable fronting the Canal still has a date plaque and the remains of the steam powered lifting gear connected with its use as a corn mill. It is considered to be a locally important canal building which could satisfactorily be given a new use.

The grade II listed railway Viaduct was built in the mid 19th Century. The single span structure is made of rough stone with a brick arch soffit and semi-circular arch. It has rusticated stone voussoirs and a rolled stone cornice above the crown.

The railway was constructed in 1859 to carry Cannock's coal to the Trent Valley and connected Rugeley with Walsall, Wolverhampton and Birmingham. A branch line, now truncated, served Leahall Colliery (now the site of The Towers Business Park)

South section: Love Lane railway viaduct to Lea Hall Road (A51)

The power station dominates the skyline and can be seen along the whole length of the canal. It is a major town employer and the tower has recently been replaced.

The Mossley Wharf was once a large transit point between horse drawn wagons and the mines. The Mossley Tavern and workers cottages line the land between the road and the canal and were built following the introduction of the wharf, being typical of the District in the 19th century. Numbers 676-71 Armitage Road existed by 1840, were angled at the entrance to the coal wharf, possibly as a check office and home of a wharf supervisor. The adjacent cottages have a date stone reading ' Mossley Place 1850', and the Mossley

tavern probably dates from about that time. These buildings stand along the Armitage Road backing onto the Canal, adjacent to the Canal bridge. Despite having been subject to a certain amount of cosmetic alteration, the buildings together retain string group value.

Tramways such as the ‘Ginny Wagons’, built in 1810, ran from Brereton Levels down through the village across Main Road in Brereton village to the Talbot wharf. Later, a tunnel under Main Road enabled the steam powered rope haulage system to be extended to the basin, used until 1922 when canal trade declined. The tunnel was then used as a pedestrian underpass and only filled in in 2003.

Bridge number 64 is a traditional late 18th Century red brick Canal accommodation bridge that is currently disused. It is a single span humpback bridge with stone coping and corner piers.

Milepost 32 is a 1983 replacement for an original post.

The Old Brewery Cottages on Armitage Road adjacent to the Canal form a mainly intact example of early 19th century housing provided by an employer for his workers as an integral part of a small industrial enterprise. A map of 1820 appears to show the site in use as an iron foundry, including the land occupied by 143, 145 and 147 Armitage Road, however by 1834/5 the premises had become a brewery. The siting may have benefited from the transport links provided by the Canal. The cottages today remain much as built in the early 19th century.

The County’s Historic Environment Record indicates areas of potential importance in increasing knowledge of the history of the town. Archaeology may exist anywhere within the boundaries of historic towns and has the potential to help understand origins, development and growth, therefore any development proposals involving the disturbance of ground within the Conservation Area will need to be accompanied by an archaeological assessment as part of a Heritage Statement to accompany the planning application.

The historic development of the Conservation Area is shown on Plan 2.

4. Townscape Character Appraisal

Location and Landscape Setting

The Trent and Mersey Canal through Cannock Chase District runs along the contour of the south bank of the River Trent on ground gently rising from the valley to the forest and heath of Cannock Chase to the west. The historic market town of Rugeley lies roughly halfway between the County town of Stafford and the cathedral city of Lichfield, and the Canal runs along the eastern edge of the town, beyond which stands Rugeley Power Station with its landmark cooling towers, and further east run the River Trent and West Coast mainline railway. Waterways and routeways follow the contours between the Chase and the River, features which have determined the historic layout of the town.

Spatial analysis

The Canal Conservation Area is a predominantly linear landscape feature with little variation in topography as it passes through the District. The width of the Canal and towpath on the eastern side (the 'Canal corridor') is fairly uniform throughout. The Canal is divided into sections by the substantial bridges at intervals.

The northern section of the canal is mostly rural in character. The eastern side of the canal is the flat floodplain of the river Trent with arable fields between the river and the canal. A hedgerow and small trees border the canal. The West Coast Main Line railway embankment and Rugeley bypass (A51) can be seen in the distance. The western edge of the canal is bordered by a raised escarpment that runs through the gardens of houses that sit on the raised bank above the canal. As the canal approaches the road bridge the bank descends nearer the water level and is inhabited by mature trees.

The central section of the canal is built up and runs through Rugeley town centre. The eastern edge of the canal north of Leathermill Lane is bordered by industrial premises separated by a thin hedge/tree border. The canal south of the road bridge contains a caravan park, a few houses and a large open site that is subject to future retail development. A bank topped by a hedgerow and a minor road separate the properties from the canal.

The western side of the canal, north of Leathermill Lane bridge, contains the Parish church, a community run playing field and residential accommodation including converted canal warehouses. Commercial premises, a derelict mill and modern houses line the bank south of the bridge. The listed railway viaduct dominates the southern part of this section and creates a definitive boundary line.

This stretch of canal also runs through the urban area but has a more tranquil appearance due to the established vegetation along the banks. A high earth embankment lined with trees separates the large Towers Business Park that lies along the eastern side of the canal. There is also a small pocket of flat land at the Mossley with a few buildings and development space. The western side of the canal is bordered by Armitage road for most of its length and a few sparse trees. The northern section has a row of older red brick properties and there is some isolated newer housing and commercial premises to the south.

As it enters the District from the north after the Aqueduct it makes a 90 degree bend in front of an area of higher ground, Brindley Bank, which rises five or six metres above the Canal. From there the land on both Canal frontages becomes generally level and the Canal curves gently as it meanders through the District without the need for locks. The northern section of the Canal is abutted by residential gardens all along the west bank with open country on the east side, then gardens abut the east side too. It has a spacious, semi-rural/suburban setting and a sense of containment is mainly provided by mature trees along the boundaries.

The central section running past Rugeley town centre as far as Leathermill Lane is bounded either by gardens or the green space of St Augustine's Field to the west and modern industrial units on Power Station Road to the east, then residential and

commercial properties on both sides near the town centre. This section has a more urbanised setting, though still with significant tree groups, and fencing and large buildings closely about the Canal boundary. Love Lane runs south from Leathermill Lane beside the Canal at a higher level by about two metres which helps to contain the corridor at this point.

The southern section after the railway viaduct is bounded by residential gardens and lengths of Armitage Road to the west and the Towers Business Park, with a small residential frontage development near the Mossley, to the east. Ground levels here are mostly at Canal level apart from tree planted banking a short way away within the Towers site, and again the waterway has a more open, semi-rural/suburban feel. The Canal leaves the District just before Rugeley By-pass Bridge.

Within the Conservation Area boundaries the pumping station and churches stand as significant buildings within their own large green spaces, mostly screened in views from the Canal by mature trees. The imposing three storey Old Mill in the central section which stands on the Canal bank together with its adjacent cottage, is prominent in views at this point. Behind the cottages at the Mossley is the infilled former coal wharf, a triangular reed-filled space, and further south is the infilled former Brereton Basin, the terminus of a tramway from the collieries around the village. Other wharves once existed at intervals, and historic maps indicate the location of cranes, such as at Brindley Bank.

Character Analysis

Townscape is the feature which distinguishes the special interest of a Conservation Area from the merits of individual buildings within it, including the inter relationship between buildings and spaces. It derives from appearance, history and historical association, and its nature and quality may vary within the area. Examples are noted to illustrate features and are not intended to be comprehensive.

The Canal Conservation Area is defined by its well landscaped appearance, consisting more of buildings in a landscape rather than the commonly accepted definition of townscape. Some buildings within the Conservation Area are individually distinctive in design, form and materials, recognised by their listed status. Those relating most closely to the construction and operation of the Canal tend to be unified by their traditional red brick construction and close proximity to the waterway.

The pumping station, church and cottages retain their original uses; the Old Chancel stands a ruin and the Old Mill is in low key use (car repairs) and in dilapidated condition. The waterway itself remains in use as a transport route, though for leisure purposes rather than commercial, and is a valuable asset.

The mature trees which line the canal corridor and soften the sites of the individual buildings create a strong positive green element. They have both visual and environmental value, in winter the branch structure of the many deciduous trees continues to add visual variety. Conservation Area status places protection over all

trees within the boundary, though many of those which bound the Canal are growing on gardens beyond the boundary, so are beyond the area of protection. Some trees and groups which make a particular contribution along the edges of the Conservation Area have the protection of Tree Preservation Orders. The green Canal corridor also has an important ecological role as a wildlife route including bat foraging area.

Along the northern section on the west bank of the Canal stands a house with a datestone of 1841, which originally formed part of the Churchdale House estate, and believed to have had a cobbled yard and wharf for the use of the estate.

There are three brick bridges crossing the Canal, all of a traditional humped back design. One is listed (Bridge 64, near Wheelhouse Road), a further one (at The Mossley) is a little altered original and a third (at Leathermill Lane) has been partly rebuilt. The bridge at The Mossley has been strengthened with metal supports on the south side. The listed bridge once led to cottages and farmland east of the canal which was developed as Leahall Colliery in the 1950's when the bridge became (and remains) redundant. Some of the bridge structures show evidence of rope wear from horse drawn barges, such as on the bridge at Leathermill Lane. There are two modern concrete road bridges (carrying Station Road and Wheelhouse Road). The railway crosses the Canal on a stone arched bridge (listed), and there is a disused concrete railway bridge adjacent which carried the colliery branch line.

The canal bridges frame views along the Canal corridor, and create attractive reflections in the water. There is interplay of light and shade from the overhanging trees which adds to the atmosphere.

Traffic noise is evident at various locations, and the sound of passing trains at the north section of the corridor where there are more open views across fields to the mainline railway and By-pass.

Building materials

The most characteristic building material in the Conservation Area is the dark orange-red brick used for the canal bridges, cottages and old Mill. The churches are built of white sandstone, as is the listed railway bridge. The brick bond used for the Canal bridges and Old Mill is English bond – alternate courses of all 'headers' and all 'stretchers' on each row. This is considered to be the strongest bond because no continuous vertical joints are formed in the brickwork. It was popular where structural strength was considered important. The cottages at The Mossley are built in Flemish bond – alternate 'headers' and 'stretchers' on each course. This is a decorative bond introduced in the 17th century for more important buildings and by the 18th century was used increasingly for smaller buildings. Its greater economy in the use of brick (the proportion of 'stretchers' is greater) made this bond popular. Most of the cottages at The Mossley and Brewery Cottages have been painted or rendered in light colours. Staffordshire is well endowed with clay suitable for brick and tile making, and local brickyards operated into the 20th century. The modern buildings adjacent to the Canal are built in Stretcher bond, widely used today for the construction of cavity walls, where all the bricks are 'stretchers', except for a 'header' in alternate courses at the quoin.

Traditional roof coverings in the Conservation Area include red and blue clay tiles and blue slate. Such materials give a texture and liveliness not found in artificial materials and are to be valued. Some remnants of cast iron rainwater goods remain.

The public realm

The Canal corridor is accessible to the public from various points along its length beside the road bridges. At Wheelhouse Road a new fenced and surfaced access path has been created recently in conjunction with adjacent new development on The Towers, improving accessibility at the south end of the Canal which previously was very limited. Elsewhere the access points would benefit from improvements to surfacing and gradient. The central section of towpath is generally surfaced with a 'Bredon gravel' type, self binding finish, but it varies in width. In the north and south sections it has a more natural finish but is inclined to be muddy. Beneath the older Canal bridges there is usually a surface of stone setts to stand more concentrated use.

Street furniture includes signage, with British Waterways/Council information boards at intervals giving brief historical and tourist information, and benches. Mostly this is focussed on the central section of Canal.

The waterway has a variety of edging including stone blocks near Leathermill Lane, metal sheet piling in many locations and coir rolls between Leathermill Lane and the Mossley. The latter seek to provide a more natural edge whilst resisting wash from boat traffic. In a few areas there is just a natural turf edge however this is being eroded by boat wash. The Canal corridor has been the subject of several improvement schemes in the past – the north section improved the edging and towpath, benches and tree/hedge planting in the early 1990's; the central section was improved in the early 2000's. The southern section of the Canal remains to be considered for similar improvements.

There is a replica cast iron milepost (made in 1977) south of The Mossley reading 'Shardlow 32 miles' and 'Preston Brook 60 miles'. Milepost 34 at Brindley Bank is a 1984 replacement for an original post. The Trent and Mersey Canal Society have reinstalled many lost mileposts. The original 1819 cast iron mileposts were made in Stone and assisted in the collection of tolls.

Visitor moorings exist mainly along the central section of Canal close to Rugeley town centre, with occasional boats moored at other locations. The frequent passing of boats brings great vitality and a sense of long tradition to the Conservation Area.

The setting of the Conservation Area

In a linear Conservation Area its surroundings and setting have potential to make a very significant impact on the overall visual character and appearance. The presence or absence of trees and hedges, the close proximity of open countryside, the quality and condition of adjacent buildings and curtilages, including boundary treatment and an array of garden landscaping, all have an impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area.

Views out of the Conservation Area are extensive in places and more limited by mature tree growth and ground levels in others. In particular views of the St Augustine and Old Chancel church towers are visible though the trees near Station Road, and the spire of Sts Joseph and Etheldreda can be seen nearer the town centre. The four cooling towers of Rugeley Power station form a landmark in views from the south section of the Canal.

Plan 3 shows important features of the Conservation Area making a positive or negative contribution.

5. Loss/Intrusion/Negative features

The character and appearance of a Conservation Area can easily be eroded as a result of unsympathetic alterations and development and the decay or removal of characteristic features. Modern development, though 'of its time' is not always sympathetic to character and appearance, but conversely copying 'historic' architecture may not be the best solution. Through careful design new buildings can respect, complement and enhance the architectural character of an area. Fine buildings of any type, style and age can enhance the visual environment and contribute to a sense of community.

Modern infill development, residential and commercial, occupies significant lengths of Canal frontage in some locations, the more recent of which has sought to respect its Canal-side location. For example, as The Towers has developed, buildings have presented a more attractive elevation to the Canal, with significant soft landscaping and restrictions on outside storage, so that generally the view from the towpath is more attractive than other sections of the Canal, such as the rear of units on Power Station Road.

Wheelhouse road bridge access into Towers Business Park is a unattractive bridge.

The cumulative effect of many minor alterations to individual properties can also have a negative effect. Special architectural interest is very vulnerable to the process of modernisation, much of which is permitted without the need for any planning permission and the result can be loss of diversity and subtlety, affecting character and appearance. The recovering of roofs, removal of chimney stacks and other architectural details and the replacement of traditional timber windows in artificial materials and to non traditional designs can have a similar impact. The loss or decay of distinctive local features, such as those noted in this Appraisal, can detract from special architectural and historic interest. Remaining features often tend to be the remnants of what once existed in the area. Bearing in mind that these are the very features which helped to create the distinctive character and appearance in the first place, their vulnerability is evident. The upgrading of property does not have to be at the expense of historic fabric and character, conversely retention of appropriate detailing reinforces special interest. The Conservation Area is fortunate in retaining buildings and structures of architectural and historic significance. Keeping historic buildings in use is the key to keeping them in a good state of repair.

Restoration of the mill and improvements to the rear of properties facing the canal, including commercial property on the west bank and terraced housing on the east bank, should be encouraged to improve the appearance at the gateway to the town centre.

Along the Canal corridor much boundary treatment is good, such as hedgerows or traditional railings, and also modern green ‘weldmesh’ type fencing to give a secure but attractive finish. In other places, however, it is poor, and would benefit from replacement with a more suitable alternative or planting up to provide better screening. The electricity substation should be shielded from view via fencing or hedging next to the towpath entrance at Leathermill Lane bridge. The Mossley new housing estate access road has a crash barrier fronting the canal in the middle of the hedgerow that looks out of place. It should be replaced with hedgerow, wooden bollards or at the very least be painted green.

Towpath surfaces in some locations would benefit from repair or resurfacing in a similar manner to the good existing sections. Other notice boards and street furniture would benefit from an update to enhance attraction to visitors to the area and encourage boaters to stop and visit Rugeley.

A Management Plan will be prepared following from this Appraisal which will seek to address the detailed issues raised.

6. Community Involvement

A report will be taken to the Council’s Cabinet seeking approval for consultation on this Draft Appraisal document. Occupiers of all properties in the Conservation Area, local ward councillors, Rugeley Town Council, The Landor Society and technical consultees will receive publicity about the Document, inviting comments. Copies will also be sent to British Waterways, The Inlands Waterways Association and the Trent and Mersey Canal Society for comments. A copy will be published on the Council’s website www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk At the end of the consultation period representations received and proposed changes to the draft in the light of those representations will be reported back to the Council’s Cabinet. The Council will then adopt the amended Appraisal.

7. Boundaries

The boundary of the Conservation area follows the boundaries of the Canal corridor with extensions to cover nearby significant buildings and groups. The boundary has been reviewed during preparation of this Appraisal and one change is considered necessary at this time – to exclude from the Conservation Area a small area of modern infill housing in Church Croft Gardens would make more sense of the boundary in this location.

8. Enhancement Opportunities/Recommendations for Management/Planning Policy Guidance

A specific responsibility is placed upon Local Planning Authorities to take account of the character of a Conservation Area when exercising their duties. The local distinctiveness of particular areas is greatly to be valued and needs to be reinforced in order to maintain diversity, attractiveness and historic continuity. Unless or until financial support is available as grants for building works or environmental enhancements the main opportunities for enhancement of the Conservation Area are through the Development Control process and in conjunction with British Waterways. This Appraisal makes recommendations on what it is desirable to preserve, and how, and sets out broad principles for enhancement which may be further developed within a Management Plan for the Conservation Area:

Recommendation 1: Consideration of planning applications will be informed by the detailed descriptions of character contained in this Appraisal, particularly the features of interest and the areas which would benefit from improvement. There will be a general presumption in favour of preserving buildings and features identified in this Appraisal as making a positive contribution to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Recommendation 2 : Proposals affecting the Conservation Area must be advertised and account taken of representations in determining each case.

Recommendation 3: Future development should take account of the special interest of the area as set out in the Appraisal. New development will need to acknowledge the relationship of buildings to spaces and reflect existing architectural detailing, including colour, texture and range of materials. It should also respect existing trees. Any opportunities for enhancement of areas highlighted as having a negative visual impact or allowing refurbishment of the exterior of buildings would be welcomed.

Recommendation 4: Traditional materials should be used in all building repair works and both hard and soft landscape elements treated sensitively:

- Where repair works fall within planning control the use of traditional materials for routine repairs will be required, and elsewhere encouraged.
- The repair/retention of original chimney stacks and pots, ridge tiles and other architectural details will be encouraged.
- Re-roofing should use traditional tiles or slates rather than artificial substitutes. Where necessary, window replacement should match the original design and glazing pattern.

Recommendation 5: Public realm improvements should include a consistent approach to street furniture and reduction of clutter, with the inclusion of appropriate and suitably sited trees. Environmental and boundary treatment improvements in key locations will be sought.

Recommendation 6: Opportunities to enhance the setting of the Conservation Area, views in and out and pedestrian links with Rugeley town centre including enhanced access to the towpath will be pursued.

Recommendation 8: The Council will undertake to work with property owners and British Waterways to seek satisfactory solution of issues adversely affecting the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

9. Useful Information

Further advice is available on the content of this Appraisal from the Planning Services Team, Cannock Chase Council, Civic Centre, PO Box 28, Beecroft Road, Cannock, Staffs WS11 1BG.

The principal sources of historic and local information referred to are:

- Rugeley Library Local Studies Section Clippings Files
- Staffordshire County Council Historic Environment Record
- ‘Looking Back on Rugeley’ by Alec Neal, published by The Landor Society.

Proposed plans and photographs

Plan 1: Conservation Area boundary

Plan 2: Development History

Plan 3: Townscape Appraisal

Photographs to illustrate

Draft Generic Conservation Area Management Plan

Introduction

Purpose

A Conservation Area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Cannock Chase District has eight Conservation Areas within its boundary and the Council is required from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement. The concept of Conservation Areas was introduced under the Civic Amenities Act 1967 and historic areas are now extensively recognised for the contribution they make to our cultural inheritance, economic wellbeing and quality of life.

The eight Conservation Areas are:

Cannock Town Centre

Bridgtown

Rugeley Town Centre

Main Road, Brereton

Trent and Mersey Canal

Church Street, Rugeley

Talbot Street/Lichfield Street, Rugeley

Sheep Fair/Bow Street, Rugeley

The first to be designated in 1973 was Rugeley Town Centre and the most recent in 2004 was Sheep Fair/Bow Street. Further information and maps relating to these Areas are available on the Council's website www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Conservation Area legislation recognises that historic and architecturally interesting buildings do not exist in isolation but stand within a particular urban or rural context which provides a setting for the buildings and may have a special recognisable character or appearance. The natural landscape of trees and hedges as well as the built landscape of designed and vernacular buildings contribute to this character. The legislative background to Conservation Areas has been piecemeal and although best practice has developed over time, concerns continue to be expressed at how change is resulting in their deterioration. Most recently this issue has been publicised by English Heritage in their 'Conservation Areas at Risk' campaign in 2009, when Rugeley Town Centre and Talbot Street/Lichfield Street Conservation Areas were highlighted as 'At Risk'. An integrated approach to the care of Conservation Areas is therefore as important as ever, and if historic areas are to survive and designation of a Conservation Area is to retain any meaning then the commitment of all involved is vital.

Once Conservation Areas are designated, proposals seeking to preserve or enhance their special character or appearance can be proposed and consulted upon. The first step in preparing proposals is to clearly define the special interest of the Area through an Appraisal - a written assessment of its character and appearance – what matters and why. This describes its historic development, analyses its character, touches on negative features and makes recommendations for its enhancement including how change can best be accommodated. Appraisals are subject to consultation and publicity to ensure the

involvement of those most affected. A programme of Appraisals for all the above Conservation Areas is nearing completion.

The next step is to set out the means by which preservation and enhancement of that character and appearance may be pursued through preparation of Management Plans. The approach being taken in Cannock Chase District comprises an overall Generic Management Plan, setting out the package of generic measures available to the Council to apply to all its Conservation Areas, and a series of concise Area-Specific Management Plans relating to the individual Conservation Areas, including recommendations for action, which will need to be read together.

The Appraisal and Management Plan documents are intended to result in an understanding of why the Areas are important, what features and qualities should be retained and how change, including new development, could be accommodated whilst reinforcing the special character. Designation of a Conservation Area is not intended to prevent change but to ensure that it takes place in a way sympathetic to the special interest of that particular area. A Conservation Area is subject to incremental change, through replacement windows and roofing materials for example, as well as more dramatic change, such as redevelopment and infill schemes. Some work requires planning permission whilst other work does not. Some areas are in a state of relative economic decline and suffer from lack of investment and decay, in others the qualities that make the Area appealing also help to encourage over-investment and pressure for development. A Management Plan is essential if such pressures and situations are to be handled in an appropriate way.

Policy Background

Government Policy recognises the importance of effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment through legislation and policy guidance. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) provides a full statement of Government Policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other features, and complements the guidance given in PPG16: Archaeology and Planning (1990). English Heritage also published guidance on the preparation of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in 2005. PPS15 will supersede PPG15 and 16 in due course.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (2008) sets out a framework of policies seeking to protect and enhance the historic environment. It highlights the need to identify, conserve and enhance the region's diverse historic character and manage change in such a way that respects local character and distinctiveness. Revisions to the RSS are currently being progressed.

The Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 explains the planning strategy within the County, including broad policies to preserve and enhance the special character, appearance and interest of Conservation Areas. Its 'saved' policies are retained for the time being.

Cannock Chase Local Plan 1997 represents the local policy dimension, until replaced by the Local Development Framework. Relevant 'saved' policies are B1, B2, B3, B4 and B5 relating to the historic environment and C15 protecting trees. The Conservation Area Appraisals already carried out form background documents to the Local Development Framework, and the Conservation Area Management Plans will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents.

This document has been prepared in accordance with this policy background.

Content

This Management Plan aims to set out the generic measures and strategies available to the Council to address the issues highlighted in each Conservation Area Appraisal, to which the area-specific Management Plans will refer. It draws together a range of useful existing controls and tools and suggests how they might be used to achieve positive action to the benefit of the Conservation Areas. It also considers the issue of resources, both human and financial, and the involvement of the local community. Effective Conservation Area Management requires a clear idea and specific policies for the improvement of the area and for tackling problems in a number of co-ordinated ways.

Consultation and publicity

Consultation and publicity on the Draft Management Plan is expected to follow a similar procedure as adopted for the Appraisals. A report will be taken to the Council's Cabinet seeking approval of the Draft for consultation. A copy of the Draft will then be sent to local Ward Councillors and Town/Parish Councils with Conservation Areas in their areas, the Landor Society and technical consultees such as the County Council and English Heritage. Occupiers of all properties in Conservation Areas will be consulted, newspaper advertisements will invite comments more widely and copies will be available in local Libraries and on the Council's website. At the end of this process comments received and proposed changes to the Draft in the light of these will be reported back to the Council's Cabinet prior to adoption of the Management Plan. Involvement of the local community in development of the Management Plan is essential if the proposals are to succeed and the long term viability of the Conservation Areas as important assets is to be secured. A 'partnership' approach will provide the local community with the opportunity to suggest ideas for the enhancement of 'their' Conservation Area and determine priorities for action.

Delivery and Monitoring

The Management Plan aims to provide a medium to long term strategy and act as a working document to be reviewed on a five year cycle. Delivery of the measures put forward will be by a combination of means including encouragement of high quality design and raising awareness of historic environment issues by the Council, use of developer contributions to finance public realm improvements, and commitment to the preservation and enhancement of appearance and character by developers/development professionals and the local community. The plan is intended to be visionary, and bear in mind that doing nothing in some circumstances can be a positive decision too. New ways of improving Conservation Areas need to be found and the Management Plan has a

role to play in stimulating debate. It aims to provide guidance for all those proposing and considering changes in Conservation Areas, as well as those responsible for keeping Conservation Areas in a well-maintained condition, and be accessible and readable by all.

Resources

Unless or until financial support becomes available as grants for building works or environmental enhancements the main opportunity for enhancement will be through the Development Control process to ensure that future development requiring planning permission takes account of the special interest of the Conservation Area. The plan enables decisions to be taken within the context of an overall strategy for the area, albeit step by step, and tackling any issues in a co-ordinated way, making use of all the powers available. Where planning permission is not required, the use of traditional designs and materials for alterations and repairs as appropriate will be encouraged as the responsibility of property owners. Political commitment to achievement of the priorities and allocation of resources will be important, priority for Conservation Areas is a core activity of the Council and needs to be supported by elected members, Council leadership and all departments. Increased understanding of historic places will lead to better informed decisions overall, vital for the creation of environments to be proud of. HELM (Historic Environment Local Management) is part of English Heritage's wider commitment to provide the tools for local authorities to manage change in the historic environment, and can provide training for Members and Officers, as well as guidance documents. The process of enhancement can be tackled incrementally, as resources permit, on a step by step basis moving towards the long term strategy. The overall situation will require monitoring using a periodic photographic survey to monitor change over time, identify new issues and to measure success.

Generic guidelines and actions

Development Control

Planning permission is required for new development, material changes to the external appearance of unlisted buildings and changes of use, with exceptions. Conservation Areas are not intended to prevent change but to ensure that it takes place in an appropriate way which retains and enhances the special qualities of the area. Planning applications for development in Conservation Areas need to be supported by a Design and Access Statement which explains the design thinking behind the application and the effect on the historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area to ensure that it has been given proper consideration. Design and development briefs will be encouraged for any substantial development proposals.

Conservation Area Consent is required to demolish a building or structure in a Conservation Area over a certain size, and specific controls apply to Listed Buildings. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, features and boundary treatment which make a positive contribution to a Conservation Area, unlisted buildings of particular interest, protection of significant views, trees, tree groups and skyline features. Removal of buildings making a negative contribution can however enhance a Conservation Area.

Pre-application advice will be encouraged prior to proposals reaching the application stage to ensure that the applicant is aware of relevant matters. Increased understanding of historic places leads to better informed decisions, vital for the creation and efficient management of environments which the community can take pride in. Incremental change can make significant differences over time, and with guidance such changes can be beneficial.

Applications will be considered for their suitability based on National and Local policies (see Policy Background above). Within Conservation Areas design policies are more stringent whilst other planning policies, such as car parking requirements, may be applied more flexibly because the need for new proposals to be sympathetic with their surroundings is more important in order to avoid erosion of the local distinctiveness, diversity, attractiveness and historic continuity which is very vulnerable to change. Conservation Area Appraisals will also be used to assess how applications affect the special interest of the area. Decisions will be based on such policies to achieve fairness and consistency of approach. Applications for sites within or close to a Conservation Area will be considered by the Council's Conservation Officer (who will have relevant qualifications, long experience or both) and, in the case of more significant proposals, English Heritage, the Government's Conservation Adviser. Applications in Conservation Areas will be advertised in the local press and by site notice and local bodies such as Town and Parish Councils are consulted. All observations received will be considered in reaching a decision. Proposals affecting the setting of a Conservation Area should endeavour to ensure that views in and out of the Area remain unspoilt.

The Southern Staffordshire Design Awards scheme seeks nominations every two years for new development of particular quality and includes schemes affecting listed buildings and in Conservation Areas. The Council welcomes nominations for the scheme as an incentive for raising design standards in the District.

- Pre-application advice will be encouraged
- Design and Access Statements will be required for planning applications including householder development to address design thinking and impact on special architectural/historic interest. They should explain how the design has taken account of the special architectural/historic interest of the area, and explain the approach to ensuring that this is preserved or enhanced. If aspects of the design impact on this they should explain what measures have been taken to minimise this impact.
- Design and development briefs will be encouraged for substantial proposals
- A Heritage Statement will be required for applications within or affecting the setting of Conservation Areas
- Applications within or adjacent to a Conservation Area will be assessed by the Council's Conservation Officer and, for larger scale proposals, English Heritage
- Consideration of applications will be informed by the relevant Appraisal for the Conservation Area
- Consideration will be given to the preparation of design guidance covering specific issues

- Consent to demolish a building in a Conservation Area will be granted only where it can be shown that it is wholly beyond repair, incapable of beneficial use, of inappropriate structure or design, where its removal or replacement would benefit the character or appearance of the Area and where there are approved detailed plans for redevelopment.
- There will be a presumption in favour of retention of buildings, features and boundary treatment making a positive contribution, unlisted buildings of special interest, Local List buildings, protection of significant views, trees and tree groups and skyline features.
- When considering new development outside but affecting the setting of the Conservation Area the Council will endeavour to ensure that proposals respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and that views in and out remain unspoilt.
- The Council will encourage nominations for the Southern Staffordshire Design Awards seeking to raise design standards in Conservation Areas.

Enforcement Strategy

Where the development control process is not followed in whole or in part and alterations/development is unauthorised or conditions attached to planning permissions are not met enforcement action is available to the Council to secure appropriate control. Enforcement action is at the Council's discretion however will always be used when the character or appearance of a Conservation Area is threatened. Under S215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the Council may also serve a S215 Notice on an owner/occupier of any land or building the condition of which is adversely affecting the amenity of the area, particularly within a Conservation Area. Such a Notice requires the person to clean up the site or the Council can carry out the work itself and reclaim the cost from the owner.

- Enforcement action will be pursued if the Council consider that the character or appearance of a Conservation Area or its setting is threatened by unauthorised development
- S215 powers will be used if the Council consider that the condition of a building/land is affecting amenity in a Conservation Area

Article 4 Directions

An 'Article 4 Direction' is a procedure available to the Council to remove all or part of the 'permitted development' rights, as set out in Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995 (as amended). Such directions have a role to play if they would help to protect key features of a Conservation Area from loss or detriment. They need to be supported by a clear assessment of the importance of such features to the special interest of the Area. Some Conservation Areas have already undergone such loss of historic features that survey and justification is important in each case. Under Article 4(1) the Secretary of State, or the Council with the Secretary of State's approval, may direct that any specified development otherwise permitted shall not be carried out without planning permission. Under Article 4(2) the Council may direct that minor works to dwellings in Conservation Areas otherwise permitted shall not be

carried out without planning permission. Government Circular 9/95 advises that generally such rights should be withdrawn only in exceptional circumstances, and only where there is a real and specific threat. Where these have been used Councils generally feel they have been effective. Where a Direction is served the Council must notify local people and take account of their views before deciding whether to confirm the Direction within 6 months. Once confirmed the Council must give notice in a local newspaper and normally serve notice on occupiers of all affected properties.

- The Council will give consideration to the use of Article 4 Directions based on a survey and justification in each case with the decision to confirm taking account of public views

Public Realm Enhancement Strategy

Communal space, the space between buildings comprising highway and public open space, usually lies at the heart of Conservation Areas. Enhancement of the 'public realm' gives huge benefits and its design and management can be significant in reinforcing historic character. The English Heritage document 'Streets for All' provides a manual of good practice on the management of streets for all those responsible in any way for their appearance. Its primary aim is to show how practical solutions to common highway problems can be achieved in an appropriate way. The underlying principles are to reduce clutter, co-ordinate design and reinforce local character. In addition Staffordshire County Council's publication 'Conservation within the Highway: Structures of Historic Importance' (2004) sets out repair and design principles in relation to the historic environment.

It is essential that improvements are directed with specialist skill and based on a detailed appraisal and understanding of the qualities that contribute to local distinctiveness. Enhancement proposals should be informed by historical research, retaining existing historic features and surfaces in their original locations wherever possible. New proposals should aim to minimise physical obstruction and visual clutter, and new signs and street furniture should be properly integrated in the designed landscape of the street as a whole. Road signs and marking can have a significant effect on the appearance of a Conservation Area, and essential signs should be of a character and quality appropriate to their context. Barriers, road humps and islands inevitably introduce modern, alien elements, but the impact can be lessened if design and materials relate to the overall townscape. The main components which create the appearance of streets are ground surfaces, street furniture, traffic management and environmental improvements. The public realm must evolve to meet modern requirements, and expectations for accessibility must be taken into account, together with the implications of new equipment such as CCTV and recycling facilities.

Traditional approaches to traffic engineering have assumed that clear segregation between traffic and pedestrians is essential and have understandably required consistency and standardisation of signs, signals and markings. Such methods are being challenged by a new approach using shared surfaces and new priorities placing greater emphasis on walking, cycling, public transport and accessibility for all.

Existing tree cover makes an important contribution to the appearance and character of a Conservation Area, giving both visual and environmental value. Conservation Area designation places protection over all trees, and some trees which make a particular contribution have the additional protection of Tree Preservation Orders. New tree planting and landscape features can be used to enhance the streetscape and spaces between buildings and should reflect the history, architecture and tradition of places. They should form part of the overall urban context, and be selected and located on the basis of the specialist advice of the Council's Landscape Officer (who will have relevant qualifications, long experience or both). New planting should be used only where it makes a positive contribution to the townscape.

A high quality public realm can be achieved if those responsible for its management work together, and good design should be normal working practice. A public realm strategy based on the good practice guidance of English Heritage's 'Streets for All' (West Midlands) is proposed.

- The Council will adopt the 'good practice' principles set out in the English Heritage manual 'Streets for All' (West Midlands) and Staffordshire County Council's 'Conservation within the Highway: Structures of Historic Importance' and will work with Staffordshire County Council as Highways Authority in considering proposals affecting the public realm
- Applications within or adjacent to a Conservation Area will be assessed by the Council's Conservation, Tree Protection and Landscape Officers.
- Consideration of any work required to trees or tree removal in connection with development proposals will be informed by the Council SPG 'Trees, Landscape and Development' and the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal.

Encouragement to repair and raise standards

Where historic features, and even good modern designs in appropriate materials, make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, the presumption will be for retention and careful repair wherever possible rather than replacement to retain the historic integrity of the area. Similarly regular maintenance of the built environment, including historic boundary treatment, can be the key to avoiding the kind of incremental change which can be damaging. Special architectural or historic interest is very vulnerable to the process of modernisation and the upgrading of property does not have to be at the expense of historic fabric and character. Authentic features should be valued aesthetically and are often reflected in the monetary value of property. Standards can be raised above the mediocre. Many small changes do not require any consent and so their retention relies on the commitment of the local community, Town and Parish Councils and local amenity societies, which will be encouraged.

The profile of conservation can also be raised through increased awareness promoted through the Heritage Champion. This is a senior member of the Council, usually an elected member, nominated to promote historic environment issues at the highest level of the organisation. Cannock Chase Council has had a Heritage Champion for several years who continues to play an important role in ensuring that key strategic decisions are

taken with full consideration of their potential effect on the historic environment and encourage understanding across Council Departments.

Town/Parish Councils and local amenity societies make an essential contribution to the process and are consulted on planning applications and policy documents for their opinions. Their local knowledge is a valuable resource in identifying local character and issues, and strong links with the Council are encouraged.

- The Council will provide advice through its website, leaflets and officers on aspects of repairs to buildings and give consideration to the preparation of design guidance covering specific issues
- The involvement of the Council's Heritage Champion will be maximised
- Links with Town/Parish Councils and local amenity societies will be strengthened and promoted together with the involvement of the local community in managing and enhancing the character and appearance of a Conservation Area
- The understanding and awareness of conservation issues will be promoted across Council departments and in dealing with other authorities and public bodies focussing on the responsibility to pay regard to the special architectural or historic interest of Conservation Areas

Regeneration

High quality places attract investors, residents and businesses, and making best use of existing buildings and areas lies at the heart of a sustainable future. Several of the District's Conservation Areas are focussed on commercial areas, including the town centres of Cannock and Rugeley. Conservation-led regeneration has a vital role to play in social and economic regeneration. A significant number of buildings in Rugeley town centre, in particular, suffer from longstanding lack of maintenance above ground floor level, and some underuse. The historic fabric appears to be slowly deteriorating leading to pressure for replacement rather than conservation and repair of traditional detailing, which in itself results in incremental detriment to character and appearance over time with a negative impact on the attractiveness of the town centre for users.

The key to addressing deterioration of urban fabric is enhancement of vitality and viability of the town centres and encouragement of property owners to take care of their buildings. Positive encouragement through partnership/grant schemes has been very successful in other towns. Conservation of the built environment can act as a catalyst for wider regeneration and to encourage inward investment to benefit the local economy and community. An Area Action Plan Development Plan Document is already in progress for Rugeley town centre.

Funding is available nationally from English Heritage through their Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas and from the Heritage Lottery Fund through the Townscape Heritage Initiative. English Heritage Partnership Schemes are designed to target funding for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Priority is currently given to industrial centres or market towns in decline with scope for regeneration, areas of clear economic need and with potential for attracting funding for such works as repairs to structures and external fabric of historic buildings, reinstatement of architectural features

and work to repair and reinstate the public realm, where this would help to reinforce the commercial attractiveness and local distinctiveness of an area. The THI was launched in 1998 to support strategic action to address problems of disrepair, erosion of quality and under use of buildings in historic areas, with priority given to schemes in areas of social and economic deprivation. Proposed schemes need to be large enough to have an impact on the historic area as a whole and may include the repair of the structure and external envelope of historic buildings and structures, authentic reinstatement of architectural features, bring vacant floor space in historic buildings back into use, and repair and reinstate elements lost from the public realm. The partners contribute to a common fund to which the HLF also contributes, which can be used to meet the cost of a project officer/team and make grants towards costs of eligible work.

Historic urban settlements including market towns and the historic transport network are amongst the areas highlighted in the Regional Spatial Strategy as being of particular historic significance to the West Midlands. The towns and canal corridor within Cannock Chase District therefore deserve special attention. The Strategy also urges that development plans should explore the regeneration potential of particular building types including redundant or underused industrial and commercial buildings, market towns outside the Major Urban Areas, church buildings and their potential community uses, 19th and early 20th Century urban housing and the canal network.

- The Council will give consideration to the potential for attracting national funding as a means to the long term enhancement of Cannock and Rugeley town centres

Creation of a Local List

The preparation and adoption of a 'Local List' has been supported by Central Government since their policy document PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (para 6.16) published in 1994. This explains that many buildings which are valued for their contribution to the local scene or for local historical associations will not merit inclusion on the national statutory List, and it is open to local planning authorities to draw up lists of locally important buildings and formulate local policies for their protection through normal development control procedures. Such buildings would not however enjoy the full protection of statutory listing but would be a material consideration in determining planning applications. The Draft Heritage Protection Bill (April 2008) made specific reference to encouraging local planning authorities to consider special local interest sites, and raised the possibility that in the future planning permission may be required for their demolition.

Some work has already taken place towards a Draft Local List for the District but the work is at a very early stage at present. The work arose from a desire to recognise unlisted buildings, objects, sites and features within the District which are valued for their special architectural or historic character. A key feature envisaged is consultation with local people in defining the significance of the historic environment in their locality. Town and Parish Councils will have an important role to play in this process. Sites will be of architectural, historic, archaeological or landscape interest, making a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness, character, appearance and heritage of the area, be in or close to their original condition, and can be either within a Conservation Area or

outside. The aim of the policy will be to ensure significant sites, currently with little or no protection, are properly considered in planning proposals that could adversely affect them or their surroundings and that any work carried out affecting them is sympathetic.

- The Council will give consideration to drawing up a ‘Local List’ of locally significant buildings throughout the District, including in Conservation Areas
- There will be a presumption against the demolition or unsympathetic alteration of buildings and features on the Local List, and planning applications affecting them will be assessed by the Council’s Conservation Officer.

Condition monitoring of Listed Buildings in Conservation Areas

Buildings of special architectural or historic interest nationally can be included on the statutory List to which controls apply to all works of alteration or extension which would affect the character of the building, including demolition. Historic buildings once lost cannot be replaced, and they can be robbed of their special interest as surely by unsuitable alteration as by demolition. They represent a finite resource and an irreplaceable asset. It is a criminal offence to carry out such works to Listed buildings without consent. Regular maintenance and repair are the key to the preservation of historic buildings. Unless there are intrinsic defects of design or materials their lifespan may be indefinite provided that timely maintenance and occasional more major repairs are regularly undertaken. Major problems are very often the result of neglect. Regular inspection is invaluable. Monitoring the general condition of listed buildings, or unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to a Conservation Area, are a means of identifying buildings at risk as early as possible. There is no specific duty on owners to keep their buildings in a good state of repair, though it will normally be in their interest to do so.

Local authorities have powers to take action where a historic building has deteriorated to the extent that its preservation may be at risk through service of an ‘Urgent Work Notice’ or ‘Repairs Notice’. Urgent Works powers are confined to emergency repairs to unoccupied buildings to keep the building wind and weather proof and safe from collapse, or action to prevent vandalism or theft. A Repairs Notice can be served in cases where protracted failure by an owner to keep a listed building in reasonable repair places the building at risk. If at least two months have elapsed following service of a Repairs Notice and it appears to the local authority that reasonable steps are not being taken for the proper preservation of the building they may begin compulsory purchase proceedings. The possible need to follow action up with a compulsory purchase order is something which must be taken into account when considering such action.

- The Council will give consideration to conducting regular routine monitoring of the general external condition of listed buildings in Conservation Areas and unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to a Conservation Area, followed by appropriate action, taking account of specific circumstances.

Designation of new Conservation Areas and reviewing boundaries

From time to time the Council will consider whether an area of the District with a special definable architectural or historic interest should be designated as a Conservation Area. These are mostly historic settlements, such as Rugeley and Brereton, but can cover other historic features, such as the Trent and Mersey Canal. There is no formal designation procedure however notification of designation must be publicised, taking effect from the date of resolution of the Council. In a similar way the periodic review of existing Conservation Area boundaries will take place. Conservation Areas can vary greatly but certain aspects almost always form the basis of defining significance – topography and its historical development, archaeological significance, prevalent building materials, character and hierarchy of spaces, quality and relationship of buildings, trees and green spaces. Current best practice favours consultation with local occupiers/residents, Ward and Parish Councillors and local interest groups prior to designation.

- The Council will give consideration to designating new Conservation Areas and reviewing the boundaries of existing Conservation Areas from time to time.

Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans

An up to date Conservation Area Appraisal provides a clear assessment of the character of a Conservation Area to provide a sound basis for decision making and for developing initiatives to improve the area. It is vital that the special interest justifying designation is clearly defined and analysed. Public participation is an integral part of the Appraisal process. Legislation places a duty on the Council to draw up and publish proposals for preserving and enhancing Conservation Areas and to consult the local community on the proposals. The character Appraisal provides a basis for developing management proposals for the Conservation Area that will fulfil this general duty. The Management Plan should be mid-long term strategy, setting objectives for addressing issues and recommendations for action arising from the Appraisal.

- The Council will prepare, consult on and adopt Appraisals and Management Plans to cover all of its Conservation Areas.
- The Council will endeavour to review these documents on a regular basis (5 year cycle) and update Conservation Area boundaries, record changes over time using photographic survey and revise the management strategy as necessary as a result of this review. The updated Appraisal and Management Plan will then be readopted.

Building Regulations

Part L of the Building Regulations makes clear that the special characteristics of a historic building must be recognised, so aim to improve energy efficiency as far as possible without adversely affecting historic fabric and appearance. Historic buildings for this purpose include listed buildings, buildings situated in Conservation Areas, buildings which are of local architectural or historic interest (on a ‘Local List’) and which are referred to as a material consideration in a Local Authority’s development plan, and buildings of architectural and historic interest in national parks, area of outstanding natural beauty and world heritage sites.

- The Council will take account of the special characteristics of historic buildings and consult its Conservation Officer as appropriate when carrying out its duties under the Building Regulations to avoid harm to character and appearance

Draft Conservation Area Management Plan : **Rugeley Town Centre**

Introduction

This area-specific Management Plan follows from the Council's Generic Conservation Area Management Plan which sets out the package of measures available to the Council to apply to all of its Conservation Areas. The area-specific Plans relate to each of the individual Conservation Areas based on the recommendations in the individual Conservation Area Appraisals.

Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area

Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in December 1973 and covers the historic core of this market town. Its boundary is shown on Plan 1. Rugeley stands between Lichfield and Stafford on the south bank of the River Trent on ground rising from the valley to the forest and heath of Cannock Chase. The Rising Brook flows down from the Chase through the centre of the town. The town was first documented at the time of the Domesday Survey, and its development has focussed on the main Lichfield-Stafford road along Upper and Lower Brook Street and part of Market Street together with Brook Square and Market Square. Also parts of Brewery Street, Bow Street, Albion Street and Anson Street which lead off the main streets.

The townscape of Rugeley town centre is defined by its informal street pattern of narrow winding streets and open spaces complemented by the diversity of building types with which it is lined. The streets are enclosed by building frontages of two and three storey height of varying plot width, design, period and materials, and seven are listed. Much of the Conservation Area appears to date from the 19th and early 20th Century, though some buildings may have earlier cores and often retain part, if not all, of their original plot to the rear, though in many cases with modern rear extensions and additions. Traffic was removed from the town centre in the 1980's and car parks and services areas created behind the main frontages. Shops form the predominant use at ground floor level, together with banks, estate agents and pubs, cafes and hot food shops. Upper floors, where in use, are mainly storage, offices or flats.

Issues identified in the Draft Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

The Draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Rugeley Town Centre has been prepared and will be reported to Cabinet to authorise public consultation. It defines the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area and identifies its negative features. These are illustrated on the Townscape plan. It makes recommendations for future management and enhancement opportunities arising from this assessment, aiming to reinforce the positive features and eliminate the negative to ensure the continued quality of its special interest over time.

Summary of its special interest

- Its long history still evident in its layout and buildings

- Its traditional street pattern of a tightly built up pedestrian town along a winding main street
- Its mixed small scale retail/commercial uses and markets
- Its townscape of diverse building types and buildings/groups of individual interest, harmonised by mass, height, scale and materials
- Its human scale, with visual interest created by irregular frontages, rooflines and design details

Main issues:

1. The retention and enhancement of buildings and characteristic features making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, including architectural detailing which is extensively subject to decay and low economic demand for properties particularly vacancy of upper floors.
2. The treatment of new development and new additions to existing buildings within and affecting the setting of the Conservation Area, including building lines and siting, height and mass, design, materials, views of landmarks, shopfronts and signage.
3. The potential for enhancement of the Conservation Area through the reduction of clutter and refurbishment of the public realm, with a focus on the open areas of Market Square and Brook Square and opportunities to improve existing limited tree planting.
4. The potential for enhancement of the setting of the Conservation Area with improved pedestrian links to surrounding areas.

Delivery Plan/Targets/Resources

A package of measures as set out in the Council's Generic Conservation Area Management Plan is available to deal with the above issues in a way beneficial to the Conservation Area. Their effective use is dependant not only on the Council but on a partnership approach including the commitment of developers, development professionals and the local community. This area specific Management Plan seeks to stimulate debate on how the issues might be addressed.

1. The retention and enhancement of buildings and characteristic features including occupancy

- The Council will encourage the retention, repair and maintenance of the following characteristic features on all buildings making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area including the unlisted buildings of particular interest:
 - timber windows, particularly sash windows, and doors to traditional designs and details
 - predominance of brick buildings with some light coloured stucco/painted render
 - blue slate and small red and blue clay roof tiles
 - predominance of pitched roofs with roof slopes facing road frontages
 - decorative ridge tiles
 - chimney stacks and clay pots
 - decorative eaves, window surrounds and doorcases
 - cast iron or cast metal rainwater pipes and gutters

- high brick boundary walling
- informal street pattern with building frontages abutting streets
- timber shopfronts to a traditional design
- The Council will discourage use of artificial materials and non-traditional designs which are bland and lacking in the rich textures and colours of natural materials and the painting and rendering of brick buildings.
- Safeguarding characteristic features will require an acceptance by property owners of their intrinsic value and a commitment to invest in their property to maintain its historic value. Historic features can be slowly lost through decay and under-investment as well as more rapidly through modernisation and unsympathetic over-investment. The Council will undertake to work with property owners to encourage appropriate maintenance and explore the option of a partnership arrangement with English Heritage and property owners to provide funding to address deterioration of building fabric.
- The Council will consider the preparation of design guidance on specific issues and offer other advice on request or via its website which can be sought prior to carrying out work.
- The Council will review the Conservation Area boundary from time to time to ensure it is still workable and that it encompasses a definable cohesive area with a particular character.
- The Council will pursue enforcement action where unsympathetic alterations which threaten the character or appearance of the Conservation Area are carried out without the necessary planning permission to achieve a more sympathetic result.
- The Council will encourage maximum occupancy of properties including flats and other appropriate uses above shops to enhance the viability and vitality of the town centre.
- The Council will promote street markets and other events which bring life into the town centre.

2. The treatment of new development

- The Council will require proposals for new infill development and redevelopment to adhere to well established good urban design principles for scale, mass, form, materials, layout, density, landscaping and boundary treatment, with the use of good contemporary design and materials or more traditional options as appropriate.
- The Council will require new development to reinforce existing strong frontages with buildings abutting streets on an informal layout, reflect existing building variety and detailing including colour, texture and range of materials and maintain or enhance views through the Conservation Area.
- The Council will consider the preparation of design guidance on specific issues such as design of shopfronts and signage, and identify areas where further guidance would be beneficial.
- The Council will pursue the economic regeneration of Rugeley town centre through an Area Action Plan, including preparation of urban design guidelines.
- The existing mix of uses, predominantly retail, will be maintained with any compatible additional uses considered which would enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.

- The Council will apply the same principles to any opportunity sites occupied by buildings of neutral or negative impact within or sites affecting the setting of the Conservation Area which come forward for redevelopment.
- The Council will seek developer contributions in conjunction with planning permissions in accordance with the Council's SPD 'Developer Contributions' 2008 and will consider using a proportion of them for enhancement of the public realm.

3. Enhancement of the public realm

- The Council will consider appropriate detailed options for enhancement of the public realm in the town centre through an Area Action Plan, including renewal or relaying of paving, replacement or refurbishment of street furniture, updating of the design of Market Square, enhancement of Rising Brook and removal of 'clutter'.
- The Council will consider the potential for enhancement of the town centre through new and replacement tree planting for the longer term in appropriate locations.

4. Enhancement of setting of Conservation Area

- The Council will apply the same urban design principles used to consider new development within the Conservation Area to new development affecting the setting of the Conservation Area.
- Opportunities for improved pedestrian/cycle links between the town centre and surrounding areas, particularly with the Canal and Elmore Park, will be pursued through the Area Action Plan to maximise use of existing assets and enhance the setting of the town centre and views in and out.
- The Council will ensure that opportunities for new development adjacent to the Conservation Area retain the necessary accessible parking and servicing to serve town centre premises as well as appropriate access to public transport facilities.

Monitoring

The Council will monitor progress towards the delivery of the above actions and the resultant impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area on a five year cycle. Some of the actions will be on-going, some will relate to specific actions which can be completed. The monitoring process together with developing Planning Policy will inform updating of the Appraisal and Management Plan over time.

Monitoring will involve further consultation with the community and may identify new issues and ideas for raising standards. Monitoring could also be carried out within the community, under the guidance of the Council.

Proposed plans and photographs

Plans from Appraisal – Conservation Area boundary and Townscape Appraisal plans
Photographs to illustrate good new development, characteristic building details and issues relating to the public realm and the setting of the Conservation Area.

Draft Conservation Area Management Plan : Brereton

Introduction

This area-specific Management Plan follows from the Council's Generic Conservation Area Management Plan which sets out the package of measures available to the Council to apply to all of its Conservation Areas. The area-specific Plans relate to each of the individual Conservation Areas based on the recommendations in the individual Conservation Area Appraisals.

Brereton Conservation Area

The Conservation Area was designated in February 2002. It comprises the core of the old village along Main Road, an interesting mix of grand houses, worker's cottages and community buildings, standing against the green backdrop of Cannock Chase. Although absorbed by the southward spread of the adjacent market town of Rugeley, its historic settlement pattern is still evident as is its earlier life as a thriving village, its listed buildings amongst the most distinctive in the District. The Conservation Area comprises the frontages of Main Road through the central part of Brereton from Armitage Lane to St Michael's Drive. Main Road forms part of the main route between Lichfield and Rugeley, and the Conservation Area is located approximately 1.5 miles south-east of Rugeley town centre. The boundary of the Conservation Area is shown on Plan 1.

Issues identified in Brereton Conservation Area Appraisal

The Conservation Area Appraisal for Brereton was adopted in May 2009 following public consultation. It defines the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area and identifies its negative features. These are illustrated on two townscape plans 2 and 3. It makes recommendations for future management and enhancement opportunities arising from this assessment, aiming to reinforce the positive features and eliminate the negative to ensure the continued quality of its special interest over time.

Summary of its special interest

- Its long history, still evident in its layout and buildings
- Its relationship to the wider area in terms of coal mining history, road and canal transport
- Its townscape having a strong frontage of individually distinctive buildings onto Main Road with terraced cottages behind
- The contribution of its mature tree cover including significant specimens and groups

Main issues:

1. The retention and enhancement of buildings, boundaries and characteristic features making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
2. The treatment of new development and new additions to existing buildings within and affecting the setting of the Conservation Area, including building lines, design, materials, soft landscaping, views of landmarks, uses and densities.

3. The visual impact of the prominent open sites in the centre of the Conservation Area on both sides of Main Road – the Cedar Tree overspill car park and the Castle Inn frontages.
4. The potential for enhancement of the Conservation Area through the reduction of obtrusive street furniture and clutter and consideration of alternative, less visually intrusive methods of traffic management and of environmental enhancement.

Delivery Plan/Targets/Resources

A package of measures as set out in the Council's Generic Conservation Area Management Plan is available to deal with the above issues in a way beneficial to the Conservation Area. Their effective use is dependant not only on the Council but on a partnership approach including the commitment of developers, development professionals and the local community. This area specific Management Plan seeks to stimulate debate on how the issues might be addressed.

1. The retention and enhancement of buildings, boundaries and characteristic features

- The Council will encourage the retention, repair and maintenance of the following characteristic features on all buildings making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area including the unlisted buildings of particular interest:
 - timber windows and doors to traditional designs and details
 - predominance of brick buildings
 - blue slate and small red clay roof tiles
 - gabled and hipped roofs
 - decorative ridge tiles and bell turrets
 - chimney stacks and clay pots
 - cast iron or cast metal rainwater pipes and gutters
 - low brick and stone walls to frontages, brick piers
 - informative plaques on buildings
 - mature trees and hedges in front, between and behind buildings
- The Council will discourage use of artificial materials and non-traditional designs which are bland and lacking in the rich textures and colours of natural materials, the painting and rendering of brick buildings, the obtrusive siting of unsympathetic modern additions, the opening up of front gardens and the wider use of dormer windows and roof lights on roof slopes.
- Safeguarding characteristic features will require an acceptance by property owners of their intrinsic value and a commitment to invest in their property to maintain its historic value. Historic features can be slowly lost through decay and under-investment as well as more rapidly through modernisation and unsympathetic over-investment.
- The Council will consider the preparation of design guidance on specific issues and offer other advice on request or via its website which can be sought prior to carrying out work.
- The Council will conduct a site survey of characteristic features with a view to progressing an Article 4(2) Direction to manage future damaging changes to unlisted dwellings which would result in certain minor works requiring planning permission. Although a significant number of windows and some doors in

Brereton have already been replaced with plastic alternatives and some chimney stacks have been lost there are many remaining details still to be protected. The survey will be used to monitor change over time.

- The Council will review the Conservation Area boundary from time to time to ensure it is still workable and that it encompasses a definable cohesive area with a particular character. Often a boundary will include both road frontages however in Brereton sections of both Main Road frontages have been excluded at this stage due to the extent of modern infill development not characteristic of the older parts of the Area.
- The Council will pursue enforcement action where unsympathetic alterations which threaten the character or appearance of the Conservation Area are carried out without the necessary planning permission to achieve a more sympathetic result.

2. The treatment of new development

- The Council will require proposals for new infill development and redevelopment to adhere to well established good urban design principles for scale, form, materials, layout, density, landscaping and boundary treatment, with the use of contemporary design and materials or more traditional options as appropriate, to reinforce the existing strong frontage and layout of individually distinctive buildings onto Main Road in a well landscaped setting, reflect existing variety and detailing including colour, texture and range of materials and maintain or enhance views through the Conservation Area.
- The existing mix of uses in Brereton will be maintained with any compatible additional uses considered.
- The Council will apply the same principles to any opportunity sites occupied by buildings of neutral interest within or sites affecting the setting of the Conservation Area which come forward for redevelopment.
- The Council will seek developer contributions in conjunction with planning permissions in accordance with the Council's SPD 'Developer Contributions' 2008 and will consider using a proportion of them for public realm enhancements along Main Road.

3. The visual impact of the open sites

- The Council will encourage the infilling of the present open sites in the centre of the Conservation Area (the result of earlier demolitions) to help enclose the Main Road frontage once more, based on well established good urban design principles for new development as set out above
- In the meantime property owners will be encouraged to carry out advance tree planting along these frontages to provide some sense of enclosure, visual interest and environmental enhancement prior to infill development taking place in due course.

Traffic management and environmental enhancement

- The Council will work in partnership with the County Highways Authority and the community to consider the potential for less visually obtrusive street furniture and road markings together with a scheme of environmental enhancements along the Main Road corridor through the Conservation Area in accordance with

English Heritage guidance 'Streets for All' and based upon an audit of highway furniture and the potential for enhancement resulting from the downgrading of Main Road to a non-primary road following completion of Rugeley By-pass.

Monitoring

The Council will monitor progress towards the delivery of the above actions and the resultant impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area on a five year cycle. Some of the actions will be on-going, some will relate to specific actions which can be completed. The monitoring process together with developing Planning Policy will inform updating of the Appraisal and Management Plan over time.

Monitoring will involve further consultation with the community and may identify new issues and ideas for raising standards. Monitoring could also be carried out within the community, under the guidance of the Council.

Proposed plans and photographs

3 plans from Appraisal – Conservation Area boundary and two Townscape Appraisal plans

Photographs to illustrate good new development, traditional details and boundary treatment, the open site frontages in the centre of the Conservation Area and the highway railings/markings.