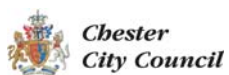


STRETTON

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL
JANUARY 2008



Maps can be seen on the following link: www.chester.gov.uk/conservationareareview

STRETTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL - JANUARY 2008

DESIGNATIONS

Conservation Area	First designated in October 1996
Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stretton Hall</i> • <i>Stretton Old Hall</i> • <i>Stretton Lower Hall</i> • <i>Timber barn adjacent to Stretton Old Hall</i>
Scheduled Monuments	None
Registered Parks and Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stretton Hall and grounds</i>
Archaeological Priority	None
SSSI	None
Article 4 directions	None
Regulation 7 directions	None
Any other designations	
Area of Special County Value (ASCV)	None
Site of Biological Interest (SBI)	None
Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV)	None

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The name Stretton is derived from *straet* meaning Roman road and *tun* meaning enclosed settlement, therefore describing Stretton as a settlement on a former Roman road. It is known that such a road existed, passing close to present day Stretton between Holt and Malpas and extending further to Chester in the north and Whitchurch in the south.

The development of Stretton into the recognisable character of today occurred largely during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries when the majority of the present building stock was constructed and the farm land and property boundaries were enclosed by stone walls and hedgerows. Many of the agricultural outbuildings are 19th century in date. The present road surface of Tilston Road is, of course, 20th century.

KEY FEATURES OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

General:	strong rural and agricultural setting, architectural influence of the three main estates: Stretton Hall, Stretton Old Hall, Stretton Lower Hall
Topography:	flat
Streetscape:	one main road crossing the settlement, from north to south, i.e. Tilston Road
Built environment:	timber framed and brick built properties two storeys high with slated pitched roof, dating from 16th century until beginning of 19th century.
Building setting:	detached houses with varying set backs between houses and

Tilston Road, dispersed layout with important open spaces between buildings and open fields around the properties

Boundary treatment: important presence of sandstone walls with curved or triangular coping stones in the conservation area

Historic floor surface: mainly Stretton Hall's gravelled driveway

Trees and hedgerows: mature trees lining the main road, mature hedgerow and formal tree layout of Stretton Hall and Stretton Lower Hall.

Open spaces: none

Change of conservation area boundaries: none

CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The conservation area is linear, running north to south and follows the route of Tilston Road as it passes through Stretton. The conservation area encompasses three main estates, the principal being Stretton Hall to the south, Stretton Old Hall, in what is essentially the centre of the conservation area and, Stretton Lower Hall to the north. The character of the area is rural and agricultural. The land is generally flat and the conservation area itself bordered by fields. Only within the grounds of Stretton Hall are there landscaped grounds for pleasure rather than for agricultural use.

In addition to the agricultural setting and influence of the estates, the detailed character of the area is defined by the architectural quality of properties and, in particular, the townscape details. There are timber framed barns at either end of the conservation area, whilst Rock Cottage contains evidence of timber framing internally. The brick built principal properties of the three estates demonstrate high quality architecture. Equally important is the quality of the sandstone and hedgerow boundary treatment that is found across the conservation area. A consistent use of red sandstone around all properties, some with distinctive triangular coping stones, creates one of the key characteristics of the conservation area. There is also a modern element that significantly affects the character and appearance of Stretton, which is Tilston Road, the fast road that runs through the settlement. It reduces the rural character and tranquility of Stretton and, without suitable stopping places, the settlement is often overlooked by the casual visitor.

The grade II* listed Stretton Water Mill, although outside the conservation area, remains an important landmark building in the area and has important historical links with the Stretton Hall estates.

POSITIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA

Listed buildings

The listed elements within the conservation area highlight the key features of its overall character. These include two types of building construction: the timber framed



Stretton Hall Farm

construction of the grade II listed barn to the south of Stretton Old Hall and; the late 17th century (and mid 18th century) brick built halls. Fittingly, the prominent sandstone wall around the grounds to Stretton Hall is separately listed. The high quality of this structure is echoed by the quality and consistency of boundary treatments throughout the Stretton conservation area.

Unlisted buildings of merit

Like the listed buildings, unlisted buildings of merit are varied in their detailing, use of materials and overall form. Most of them seem to date between late 17th century and early 19th century. When special circumstances arise and for more efficient built environment protection in conservation areas, it may be appropriate to consider the provision of article 4 directions and making use of a local list for Stretton’s unlisted buildings of merit.

Local views

There are a number of local views that are considered important and which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. It is essential that full consideration be given to the impact of development proposals upon these views. Important local views include those listed below.

- View east and west, between Rock Cottage and Mill Lane, across the open countryside.
- View from junction of Mill Lane northwards to a wildlife habitat including a pond and Willow tree with Stretton Lower Hall and gardens behind.

Townscape and Landscape details

Local townscape details contribute to the sense of local distinctiveness and may be unique to a particular conservation area. They can range from specific building detailing, characteristic building elements, boundary treatments, to the landscape qualities of the streetscape. Individually and collectively they contribute to the overall quality of Stretton as well as enhancing individual areas of character within the settlement.

Historic floor surfaces

Historic floor surfaces are important elements in the townscape of an area, particularly street surfaces, private driveways, yards and gardens. If well designed it will contribute to the townscape qualities of an area by providing a backdrop to the surrounding built fabric. There is not a great deal in evidence within the conservation area. The principal entrance to Stretton Hall retains its gravelled drive, but otherwise the hard standing around all properties is modern; cobbles, brick and concrete have been used with varying degrees of success.



Stretton Hall Farm dependencies

Boundary treatments

Boundary treatments have a significant impact upon the setting of properties, the coherence of a group and the overall character of a

conservation area. Traditional and appropriate treatments will preserve or enhance the appearance of the conservation area. There is an excellent consistency and character to the boundary treatments used in Stretton. All properties with the exception of Rock Cottage, which has individual stones along the roadside, have red sandstone walls, with either curved or triangular shaped coping stones. The boundary to Stretton Old Hall is a combination of wall and hedge. Along the roadside this treatment continues, although in many places the stone walls are in a state of disrepair.

Trees and hedgerows

Trees and hedgerows have significant amenity value and are almost always a positive contributor to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The field boundaries and land ownership are defined by mature hedgerow. Trees make a particular contribution to the conservation area by adding to the mature character of Stretton. In addition to individual trees lining the main road, the grounds of Stretton Hall and Stretton Lower Hall contain a formal layout of trees, from the grand avenue at Stretton Hall, to the pleasant orchard at the Lower Hall.

Open Spaces

The space between buildings and, the landscape within which the settlement has evolved, is as important as the built environment in defining its character. The rural character of the area is established by the fields around the properties, which are visible over low hedgerow between Rock Cottage and Stretton Lower Hall. There is also an important nature conservation site in Stretton, namely the pond outside Stretton Lower Hall which provides a habitat for a range of flora and fauna, including great crested newts.

Boundaries

The boundaries have been reviewed and no changes have been proposed.

NEUTRAL OR NEGATIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE CONSERVATION AREA

Neutral elements represent features within the conservation area that offer no strong positive or negative influence upon the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, negative features detract from the special character of an area and present the opportunity for change, which will enhance the character and appearance of an area. It may be that simple maintenance works could remedy the situation or in some cases there may be the opportunity to redevelop a particular site. The negative features in Stretton are largely the result of insensitive alterations or conversions of existing buildings, that fail to respect either the traditional palette of building materials or its rural setting and the neglect of existing buildings resulting in dereliction. Those elements considered neutral or negative features and those elements that represent enhancement opportunities within the conservation area are listed below.

Neutral elements

- The modern hardstanding around Stretton Hall and Stretton Hall Farm
- The residential conversion of the Elizabethan barn, which has retained its character despite the alterations.
- The residential conversion of the stable block to Stretton Hall Farm, which has been sensitive to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the converted outbuilding behind, which is well set back from the road.

Negative elements

- The residential conversion to the north of the Elizabethan barn
- The residential conversion to the north of Stretton Old Hall. It lies outside the conservation area but nonetheless, the use of modern materials adversely affects the setting of the conservation area and the listed Hall.
- The derelict brick outbuildings to the north of Stretton Lower Hall and the current state of repair of the adjacent timber barn. There is an approved scheme, but it does not mean it will be done.
- The disused creamery, with its extensive hardstanding and neglected buildings, adversely affects the important view into the conservation area from the north.
- Tilston Road. The amount and speed of traffic through the conservation area, results in a notable noise and air pollution problem.

Enhancement opportunities

- The derelict timber barn requires immediate attention, including the installation of an appropriate new roof and sensitive restoration of its brick and timber elevations to make the building sound.
- A suitable resolution of the site beyond the barn: the derelict brick buildings should be demolished and the area re-landscaped.
- Future planning proposals for the disused creamery site must take into account the impact any scheme would have upon the setting of the Stretton conservation area by virtue of its close proximity to the site.
- Some of the residential conversions, particularly those around the old hall to the east, have eroded the modest and vernacular character of these former agricultural buildings through modern materials and design. Future proposals and alterations should take care to avoid this. This is true particularly in respect of hardstanding, fenestration and features like garage doors.
- An assessment of the area and an introduction of suitable measures to reduce noise and air pollution caused by traffic such as a 30 miles per hour speed limit within the conservation area.

NB: These are suggestions for improvement, but owners should note that the Planning Authority has no powers to implement those recommendations.

As a result of this proposal, it is hoped that funding mechanism to achieve it maybe explored within the Community.

MANAGEMENT TOOLS

In order to maintain the character and appearance of conservation areas, Chester City Council will use the appropriate pieces of legislation relevant for this task:

- Urgent Work Notice.
This notice relates to a building which is in a very serious state of disrepair and needs basically to be water safe. It should be confirmed by the Secretary of State.
- Tidy Land Provision Notice, section 214 of the Planning Act 1990.
This notice relates to a building and its curtilage that is poorly maintained. It requires a tidy up of the property.
- Dilapidated Building Notice, section 16 of the 1984 Building Act.
This Notice refers to a building that is in a poor state. It implies either repairing the building or removal of the building. In a Conservation Area, such demolition would need a Conservation Area Consent.

THREAT

Increasing car traffic - mainly due to commuting - together with its side effects such as street enlargements, road signs, tree cutting, poorly designed garages and drive ways, inappropriate traffic calming measures, etc. often contributes to affect seriously and irreversibly the character of a conservation area.

It is therefore important to foresee and manage very carefully the design and material impact of traffic on new developments, in order to maintain the essential features which make a conservation area special, in accordance with the latest guidance on streets published by the Department for Transport (Manual for Streets, March 2007, www.communities.gov.uk).

SURROUNDINGS OF A CONSERVATION AREA

Developments on properties located in the surrounding of a conservation area should also be considered with great care, in order to maintain the essential features that make an area special.

APPENDICES

- Map of the conservation area as existing, scale 1:2,500

FURTHER READING

Chester City Council - 1997 *Living in a Conservation Area - A Guide to Householders*
Chester City Council - November 2006 *Chester District Local Plan*

Relevant Local Plan Policies

- ENV21 Protection of trees and woodland
- ENV24 Preservation of key features within the landscape and its overall character
- ENV37 Preservation or enhancement of conservation areas
- ENV38 Protection of local views
- ENV45 Preservation of the special interest of listed buildings
- ENV46 Appropriate changes of use to listed buildings
- ENV47 Protection of unlisted buildings of merit
- ENV48 Protection of registered parks and gardens