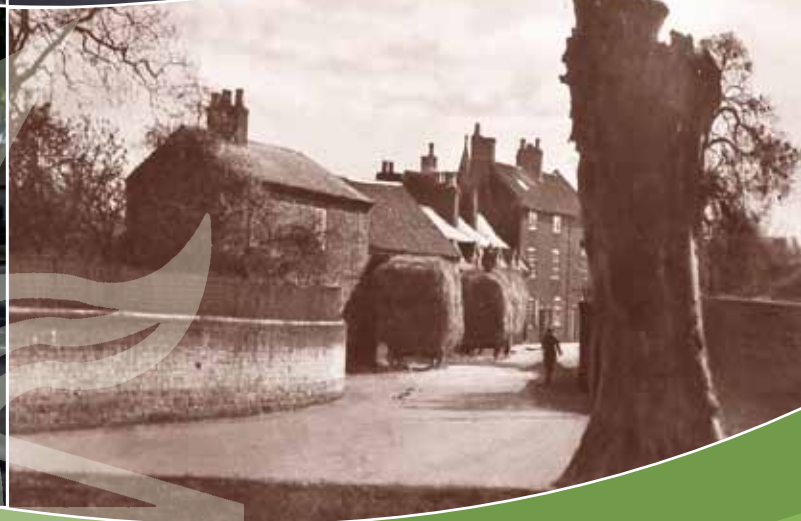


# Wombourne

## Conservation Area Management Plan



South Staffordshire Council

Adopted 11 November 2010

## Preface

South Staffordshire is a special place. Located cheek-by-jowl with the urban areas of the West Midlands conurbation and subject to constant pressure for development it still retains a strong rural character. Landscapes within the District change from one part to another, reflecting differences in the underlying geology and the location of villages within the landscape change too.

Our villages are a source of local pride and many are designated as conservation areas. Within these areas there are noticeable differences in many buildings in terms of their materials, designs and details. These variations, known as local distinctiveness, give individual character to different parts of the District.

Our first conservation areas were designated 40 years ago. The District was amongst the first in the country to do this and now has 19 conservation areas covering 16 of its villages and the entire lengths of the three canals which traverse it.

Designating a conservation area is not an end in itself. Local authorities need to develop policies which identify clearly what features of the area should be preserved or enhanced and set out how this can be done. Character Appraisals provide a clear assessment and definition of an area's interest and Management Plans set out the action needed to protect it. Within this the most important policy is a presumption against the loss of elements which have been identified in the character appraisal as making a positive contribution to the special interest for which the area was designated.

We make this presumption here in South Staffordshire and, together with our District-wide Village Design Guide, this Management Plan and Character Appraisal will provide all those involved in the development process with a clear statement of what we regard as special in our conservation areas and how we intend to preserve and enhance this.

Publication of this Management Plan and Character Appraisal of the Wombourne Conservation Area represents another important step forward for the Council in its commitment to the corporate aim: *'To be a Council which protects and enhances South Staffordshire's distinctive environment'*.

*"I commend it to you wholeheartedly".*

**Councillor David Billson – Deputy Leader, Strategic Services**



*Prepared by:-*

The Conservation Studio  
1 Querns Lane  
Cirencester  
Gloucestershire  
GL7 1RL

Tel: 01285 642428  
Fax: 01285 642488  
Email: [info@theconservationstudio.co.uk](mailto:info@theconservationstudio.co.uk)  
[www.theconservationstudio.co.uk](http://www.theconservationstudio.co.uk)

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Format & derivation

1.1.1 This management proposal document sets out a mid- to long-term strategy in the form of a series of recommendations and guidelines for the Wombourne Conservation Area. It has been informed by an accompanying character appraisal document for the Conservation Area, which identified its special character and concluded by outlining some of the issues that it faces.

1.1.2 Proposals are split into generic and specific actions. The generic ones are tied in with general management principles, which are to be applied across all of South Staffordshire's 19 conservation areas. A new character appraisal document is being prepared for each of these conservation areas in order to inform these guidelines. The specific actions section is also informed by the findings of the character appraisal, but these are tailored to the specific nature of each individual conservation area.

## 1.2 Purpose & legislative context

1.2.1 These management proposals set out guidelines by which the special character of Wombourne Conservation Area can be preserved and enhanced. They will provide a basis for preparing new policies to achieve this.

1.2.2 The preparation of management proposals for its conservation areas is one of the Council's statutory obligations under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This is discussed in more detail in Section 2.2 of the character appraisal (see Appendix 1).

1.2.3 In addition to the statutory requirement to produce these proposals, The Audit Commission also monitors the management of historic assets by local authorities as part of the overarching Best Value scheme. Best Value performance indicator BVPI 219c was a measure of how many up-to-date (less than five years old) management proposals local authorities has for its conservation areas. This indicator is a driver for best practice in conservation area management and states: 'Public support for

conservation areas as places that give identity to people and places is well-established. This indicator will monitor how local authorities are managing their development.' Although this indicator has now been deleted, the Council considers that up to date management proposals are an important planning tool and remains committed to their production.

## 1.3 Local Plan & emerging LDF

1.3.1 Current planning policies for South Staffordshire, including those governing development and management of change in conservation areas, are laid out in the South Staffordshire Local Plan, adopted in December 1996. This is discussed in more detail in Section 2.3 of the character appraisal (see Appendix 1).

1.3.2 However, a new Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the Local Plan eventually. This is part of the new planning system introduced by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

1.3.3 The management plan and character appraisal document (see Appendix 1) will sit as a Planning Document alongside the conservation policies contained within the new LDF and will be complementary to its aims of preserving and enhancing South Staffordshire's conservation areas.

## 1.4 Sustainability

1.4.1 The Council will adopt the above Management Plan and Character Appraisal as a Supplementary Planning Document. Their preparation adheres to the principles of sustainability as it underpins the new planning system. The thorough survey of the conservation area, the subsequent identification and in-depth analysis of special character and the partnership with the local community in the preparation of the documents all contribute to reaching the targets set for sustainability.

## 1.5 Consultation

1.5.1 In line with the increased emphasis on community engagement in the LDF, as well as the existing policies of South Staffordshire Council, the proposals contained in this document have undergone full public and stakeholder consultation before being adopted. Stakeholders have been consulted to inform the content of the documents and to contribute to the formation of the principles contained within them.

1.5.2 The findings of the Character Appraisal and proposals contained within the Management Plan were exhibited at Wombourne Civic Hall on the afternoon of Thursday 6th March 2008, at which 15 people attended. An open public meeting where the proposals contained within the Management Plan were described and discussed followed this.

1.5.3 A record was made of all pertinent comments and, wherever possible, these were accommodated within the final drafts of the Management Plan and Character Appraisal. Revised versions of both documents were made publicly available as downloadable pdfs on the Council's website and the final proposals featured as part of a day long exhibition held at the Council's offices on 7th October 2010.

1.5.4 South Staffordshire Council subscribes to the view expressed in the English Heritage document *Guidance on the management of conservation areas* (August 2005) regarding management proposals that: 'involving the local community in their development is essential if the proposals are to succeed.'

## 1.6 Monitoring

South Staffordshire Council will seek to review these documents every five years; taking into account Government policy and English Heritage guidance. The contents of this review are outlined in Section 4 of this document. The principles of monitoring are based around creating a 'virtuous circle' of monitoring, review and action.

## 2. Wombourne Conservation Area - Generic Actions

### 2.1 Policy

2.1.1 It is the Council's duty to preserve and enhance its conservation areas and policies are included in the Local Plan (adopted December 1996) in order to fulfil this duty. Relevant policies for Conservation Areas are covered in Policies BE7, 9, 12 and 14-19. Other policies, including Green Belt and others are detailed in Section 2.3 of the character appraisal (see Appendix 1).

2.1.2 The fundamental principles of good management of conservation areas are to be found in these policies, which will be carried forward to the emerging LDF. They can be related to the following set of generic management plans for all of South Staffordshire's conservation areas, which have been informed by the appraisal documents (see 8.1 Issues):

2.1.3 Overarching aim: to maintain the urban character of village centres and the rural character on the periphery of conservation areas:

- Through the development control process (Policies BE7 & BE9);
- Controlling new shop fronts and signage (Policies BE14 to BE19);
- Addressing traffic issues (in co-operation with Staffordshire County Council);
- Control of boundaries (gates, fencing, walls) and building details through consideration of designating Article 4(2) Directions to control minor works;
- Improving the quality of the public realm through new schemes and funding;
- Encouraging owners of historic buildings to carry out required repair or improvement through education or possible grant schemes;
- Creating a full Local List of important historic buildings;
- Regularly (every five years) carrying out a new appraisal of each conservation area, if necessary, and updating management plans: monitoring change (see Section 4);
- Regularly (every five years) assessing the need for boundary changes and new designations of conservation areas, and carrying out the changes should they be required.

- Regularly (every five years) carry out a survey to assess the condition of listed buildings.

### 2.2 Other guidance

2.2.1 South Staffordshire Council has adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on 'The Design of Shop fronts and signs in Conservation Areas'. This advises shop owners and guides planning decisions regarding changes to shop fronts.

2.2.2 These principles have been included within the District-wide Village Design Guide, which was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on 15 September 2009 and sits within the emerging LDF.

2.2.3 English Heritage and other organisations can provide other guidance, such as specialist information regarding listed buildings, traditional construction methods and materials.

### 2.3 Development Control process

2.3.1 The system of considering planning applications for their suitability and conformity with national and local policies is long established and is based on more stringent criteria in conservation areas.

2.3.2 While there are additional policies concerning conservation areas and other parts of the historic environment, it is essential that these policies be applied consistently in the development control process.

2.3.3 Applications concerning land or properties within or close to a conservation area are referred to the Conservation Department of South Staffordshire Council. Within the usual period of time for consideration of an application, a conservation specialist will advise the planning officer assigned to the application whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area. The specialist will, therefore, advise on whether the application should be supported or refused on conservation grounds.

2.3.4 As an important figure in this process, the conservation specialist will be trained in the field of historic building conservation and/or planning, either through formal qualifications, long-term experience in the field, or both. The Skills Base Best Value Performance Indicator BVPI205 measures the suitability of persons for this and other specialist roles and South Staffordshire Council is committed to meeting these criteria for such specialist roles.

2.3.5 Consistency of approach to determining planning applications is at the centre of a fair system of controlling change, especially in conservation areas. Consistent decisions also lead to an improved public perception that the system is fair and, in turn, there is a greater public engagement with the process.

2.3.6 Design and development briefs should be promoted and encouraged as a matter of course on any substantial application in the conservation areas. Due to the significant lack of spare land available for development purposes, any new development is likely to have an impact on the appearance and character of a conservation area.

2.3.7 Therefore, there is a clear case for a coherent written argument in favour of the benefits of the proposal at the time of application. This could take the form of a letter, but ideally would be a more thorough development brief and include mock-up photographs that give an impression of how the proposal would look.

2.3.8 **ACTION:** *The Council will consult a conservation specialist on all development control proposals affecting the character of conservation areas.*

## 2.4 Enforcement strategy

2.4.1 In some cases the development control process is not fully adhered to and planning permission is not always sought or implemented correctly. In these cases it is important that enforcement action is swift and effective. This will reinforce the message that the development control process is fair and that it must be followed in all cases.

2.4.2 Usually, enforcement action does not result in legal action, but is resolved through effective communication between the Council representatives and relevant parties.

## 2.5 Street management

2.5.1 The recent appraisal programme has noted that there is a certain amount of room for improvement in the public realm in most of the conservation areas in South Staffordshire. While responsibility for the highways and for some associated street furniture lies with the County Council, the maintenance of most of the public realm is the responsibility of South Staffordshire Council. (For a detailed analysis of the public realm in the Wombourne Conservation Area see Section 5.4 in Appendix 1).

2.5.2 One of the common themes throughout the conservation areas is a lack of continuity in the design and fabric of the public realm. While there is a presumption in favour of traditional materials in conservation areas, it is recognised that it is not always practical or financially viable to use traditional materials in large-scale projects.

2.5.3 However, it should always be required that consideration is given to the effect that any new introductions to the public realm will have on the character of a conservation area and reasonable efforts be made to preserve that character with minor modifications to design. For example, traditional colours such as pillar box red should be preferred to more modern shades. Also, consideration should be given to the scale of new features, particularly street lights, and 'conservation' alternatives should be requested and considered when embarking on any large scale scheme of public realm replacement.

2.5.4 It is important that the conservation section is consulted early on regarding any proposals to affect material changes to conservation areas. It is often the case that they can bring previous experience to the process, as well as a thorough understanding of the needs of an area.

**2.5.5 ACTION:** *The Council will consult a conservation specialist on all street management schemes affecting the character of conservation areas.*

## **2.6 Promotion & awareness**

2.6.1 While it is often the conservation section that deals first hand with planning applications and other schemes in conservation areas, almost every department in the Council will deal with matters affecting them in some way. It is the responsibility of every employee to give regard to the special character of conservation areas and promote awareness of them to residents. An active Historic Environment Champion (see below) can be an effective way of encouraging understanding across Council departments.

## **2.7 Historic Environment Champions/Parish Councils**

2.7.1 The Historic Environment Champion is a senior member of the Council, usually an elected member, who is nominated to promote historic environment issues at the highest level of the organisation. The Champion can, therefore, play an important role in raising the profile of conservation in general and ensuring that key strategic decisions are taken with a full consideration of their potential effect on the historic environment. This role will be optimised if the champion has a thorough knowledge of the state of South Staffordshire's historic environment and regular liaison with the conservation section.

2.7.2 Parish Councils and other local bodies are also useful contributors to the process and are consulted for their opinion of planning applications in their localities. The wealth of knowledge contained within Parish Councils is a valuable resource when identifying local character and strong ties with the conservation section are encouraged.

## **2.8 Education/community involvement**

2.8.1 An active engagement with the local community should be sustained after the consultation over the appraisal and management proposal documents. The documents should be promoted in the community as useful aides in identifying and retaining what is important in their area. This, in turn, should promote a sense of ownership that will foster an improved level of understanding of the importance of preserving and enhancing special character.

**2.8.2 ACTION:** *The Council will seek stronger ties with local bodies and interest groups and promote the continued involvement of the local community in managing and enhancing the character of its conservation areas.*

## **2.9 Production of further guidance/leaflets**

2.9.1 A new shop front design and signage guide would help to improve the main shopping area's appearance and enshrine guidance within the emerging LDF. The principles included in the existing guide have been carried forward into the new District-wide Village Design Guide SPD, adopted on 15 September 2009 and sitting within the LDF.

**2.9.2 ACTION:** *The Council will consider preparing and issuing additional design guidance and leaflets as and when appropriate. This may be in response to the continued review of conservation areas in South Staffordshire or other indicators.*

### 3. Wombourne Conservation Area – Specific Actions

In addition to the general proposals, which are to preserve and enhance the conservation areas and to maintain a good knowledge base of them through monitoring and appraisal (as outlined in Section 2), the following actions relate specifically to Wombourne Conservation Area.

#### 3.1 Conservation Area boundary review

3.1.1 After the completion of a thorough survey of the Wombourne Conservation Area, a character appraisal was written. This concluded that a number of boundary revisions would ensure that the designation accurately reflects the special character of Wombourne:

3.1.2 **ACTION:** *The following additions are proposed to the existing Wombourne Conservation Area boundary:*

- Planks Lane: Nos. 1-7;
- Rookery Lane: Nos. 115, 117, 119 (Wombrook Cottage), 121 (Paupers Cottage), 123 and Meadow View;
- High Street: The Vine Public House, Wombourne Village Hall.

3.1.3 **ACTION:** *The following deletions are proposed from the existing Wombourne Conservation Area boundary:*

- Mill Lane: Clinic, Mill Lane Farmhouse,
- Kellica, No. 1, Girl Guide Hall, Club, Club.

3.1.4 The recommendation to remove these sites from the Conservation Area is based on conclusions of a survey, which can be found in Section 7 of the character appraisal (see Appendix 1). Some of these sites are noted as negative features in their particular character area, while others do not have any specific architectural or historic special interest. Other negative sites, as shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map in the character appraisal document (see pp. 24-25), are not recommended for exclusion from the Conservation Area. This is either due to their location well within the boundary or their role within the setting of the Conservation Area.

#### **Buffer Zones**

3.1.5 The identification of a number of 'Buffer Zones' would recognise the impact that development there could have on the Conservation Area

3.1.6 **ACTION:** *The following areas are proposed to be added to the existing Conservation Area boundary to serve as Buffer Zones:*

- Water meadows around Wom Brook south and east of Walk House;
- Area to the east and north-east of the conservation area;
- East side of Walk Lane and parkland around Walk House;
- Land to the south of High Street;
- Land and meadows to the east of The Vine Public House and Wombourne Village Hall;
- School Road north of Windmill Bank.

3.1.7 These proposed changes and new designations are shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map, which is included in the Character Appraisal (see pp. 24-25).

3.1.8 **ACTION:** *The Council will continue to review the District's conservation areas, including the three canal ones, in order to ensure that each one is included within the most suitable conservation area boundary.*

#### 3.2 Site & building enhancements

3.2.1 While there are a good number of positive buildings in Wombourne, both listed and unlisted, this is offset by some inappropriate new development, including back land development, has been introduced into the Wombourne Conservation Area. Late 20th century developments in and behind High Street, Windmill Bank and Maypole Street are overlarge and have resulted in wide expanses of modern materials such as tarmac that do not enhance the character of an historic, rural market village:

- Arbourtrees Court;
- Manor Gardens;
- Clubhouses behind High Street and at the cricket club;
- Shopping parade, west side of Windmill Bank

- Maypole Court;
- Telephone exchange.

**3.2.2 ACTION:** *The Council will seek to ensure that further developments in the Wombourne Conservation Area respect its historic character. Schemes that are not of a design or scale that is sympathetic to the character of Wombourne Conservation Area will be resisted, where appropriate.*

**3.2.3 ACTION:** *The Council will encourage the redevelopment of sites or buildings which make a negative contribution, to ensure that the character or appearance of the conservation area is enhanced.*

### **3.3 Setting, views, gateways & buffer zones**

**3.3.1** The setting of a conservation area is very important. It has been established that development that affects views into and out of a conservation area can affect its special architectural or historic interest. Development that impacts in a detrimental way upon the immediate setting and longer views into and from a conservation area can detract from its special character. The proposals therefore include the identification of areas of land around a conservation area as buffer zones.

**3.3.2** Development in these zones can have an effect on the special interest of a conservation area and as such development proposals here will be assessed against the impact that they will have on the character of the conservation area. Important views are identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map in the character appraisal (see pp. 24-25).

**3.3.3 ACTION:** *The Council will seek to ensure that development within the buffer zones preserves or enhances the special interest of the conservation area and causes no harm to that special interest.*

**3.3.4 ACTION:** *The Council will also seek to ensure that these views remain protected from inappropriate forms of development and that*

*due regard is paid to them in the formulation of public realm works or enhancement schemes.*

### **3.4 Shop fronts**

**3.4.1** The Wombourne Conservation Area contains a number of shops. In some cases, poorly designed shop fronts with little regard for the host building and the street scene spoil the historic character and appearance of a building or street. The better quality shops in High Street should serve as exemplars.

**3.4.2** With regard to a proposal for 'living over the shop', where a shared access exists, its removal will be resisted. If required, a new or additional access will be sought by negotiation.

**3.4.3** Occasionally a simple modern shop front can be more appropriate than an old design. However, these should still follow historic principles governing the relationship between fascia, glazing, pilasters and stall riser, as well as the colour, materials, and signage used.

**3.4.4 ACTION:** *When considering the replacement of a shop front, owners should follow the advice contained in the District Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance entitled 'The Design of Shop fronts and signs in Conservation Areas'.*

**3.4.5 ACTION:** *The principles included in the Council's adopted SPG entitled 'The Design of Shop fronts and signs in Conservation Areas' has been carried forward into the new District-wide Village Design Guide (adopted 15 September 2009), which sits as an SPD within the new LDF.*

### **3.5 Advertisement control**

**3.5.1** PPG 15 recognises that all outdoor advertisements affect the appearance of the building or neighbourhood where they are displayed. The visual appearance of the Wombourne Conservation Area suffers from some garish advertisements including banners and A-boards, which may not be authorized.

**3.5.2 ACTION:** *The Council will ensure that all proposed advertisements accord with policies BE14 to 19 of the Local Plan and the subsequent relevant policies that will be adopted in the forthcoming LDF.*

### **3.6 Amenity space**

3.6.1 Wombourne benefits from a large area of public open space on the edge of the Conservation Area, although the area in the centre does not have free public access.

**3.6.2 ACTION:** *The Council will continue to work with other agencies to maintain and improve the open area and pathways next to the Wom Brook. It will also seek to promote opportunities for more use of the playing field in the centre of the village by the general public and encourage an improvement in its general appearance and connection with community around it.*

### **3.7 Traffic signs & street lights**

3.7.1 Signs and notices spoil the visual attractiveness of the place. While traffic signs are obviously necessary, many are ill sited and there may be an over provision. Also, the character appraisal has identified the lack of a cohesive style of street lamp in the conservation area. In conservation terms it would be ideal if a traditional height and style lamp were introduced across the area.

**3.7.2 ACTION:** *The Council will seek to compile an audit of all road signage and street furniture in the Conservation Area with a view to bringing about a simplified and better-coordinated approach in line with the principles set out in English Heritage's latest 'Streets For All' publication.*

### **3.8 Quality of pavement surface**

3.8.1 Paving and surface materials throughout the area are generally modern, uncoordinated and poor quality. In almost all cases they fail to enhance or reinforce the historic identity of the conservation area.

**3.8.2 ACTION:** *The council will seek to review design and materials of paving/streetscape throughout the area with a view to publication of a streetscape manual setting out principles for public space design. In particular, existing areas of historic external paving shall be retained where possible and proposed new areas of paving shall be appropriate to the historic environment in which they are set.*

### **3.9 Trees & landscape**

3.9.1 All trees are protected within conservation areas by the requirement for landowners to notify the Council of their intention to lop or trim them. Tree Preservation Orders provide an additional protection for significant trees and groups of trees, where any proposed action requires consent from the local planning authority.

3.9.2 Within the Wombourne Conservation Area, important trees and green spaces are indicated on the Townscape Appraisal Map (see pp. 24-25); it is expected that any development would respect their roles within the conservation area, and ensure that they would continue to preserve and enhance the special character of the Conservation Area.

**3.9.3 ACTION:** *The Council will seek to prepare a Tree Management Programme, identifying all mature trees within the Conservation Area (privately as well as publicly owned) and ensuring that priorities are agreed and funding set aside for the costs involved in remedial works or replacement.*

### **3.10 Statutory & local list**

3.10.1 While many of Wombourne's historic building are included on the statutory list, some others do not fit the strict criteria for listing but are important in the local area.

**3.10.2 ACTION:** *The Council will compile a list of buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest (i.e. a 'local list') and develop policies promoting their retention and improvement.*

### 3.11 Highways/Traffic/Pedestrians

3.11.1 The Council has no direct control over highways, which is under the remit of Staffordshire County Council.

3.11.2 **ACTION:** *The Council will work in partnership with the County Council over new schemes that will improve the control of traffic flow and pedestrian access across the different shopping streets of Wombourne. It will seek to ensure that new and existing road signage will preserve the special character of Wombourne Conservation Area.*

### 3.12 Grants – assessment of existing & potential for new schemes

3.12.1 There are currently no local or national grant schemes available to promote new schemes in Wombourne.

3.12.2 **ACTION:** *The Council will consider starting new schemes and working with other local and national bodies to create new schemes that could preserve or enhance the character of Wombourne Conservation Area.*

### 3.13 Buildings at Risk/Urgent Works Notices

3.13.1 South Staffordshire Council has completed a survey of listed buildings and will publish a report on their condition. None of the sites included on English Heritage's HERITAGE AT RISK REGISTER for South Staffordshire lie within the Conservation Area.

3.13.2 Generally it appears that all of the listed buildings in the Conservation Area are in good condition and it seems unlikely that there would be any need for Urgent Works Notices to be served in the short or medium term.

3.13.3 **ACTION:** *The Council will publish a Buildings at Risk Register for all listed buildings in the district and will develop policies to address the issues identified in the register.*

### 3.14 Article 4 Directions

3.14.1 The Council is able, through the imposition of an Article 4 Direction, to make restrictions on the permitted development rights of owners of unlisted single-family dwelling houses in the conservation area. Article 4 Directions are generally designated in order to protect particular building details such as windows, doors and chimneystacks in the interests of preserving the special character of a conservation area. An Article 4 Direction is therefore useful in strengthening controls over the unsympathetic alteration of unlisted buildings, which would cumulatively have an adverse affect on the character of the conservation area. It is worth noting that strict controls already exist over listed buildings and unlisted buildings in a variety of other uses (such as flats or shops) where Listed Building Consent or Planning Permission is already required for a variety of minor alterations.

3.14.2 The evidence of the character appraisal does not make a good case for the designation of an Article 4 Direction in Wombourne, because there are few remaining building details left to be protected on the family houses, and most of the other buildings are in other uses where controls already exist.

3.14.3 **ACTION:** *None.*

## 4. Monitoring

4.1 As recommended by English Heritage, this document should be reviewed every five years from the date of its formal adoption. It will need to be assessed in the light of the emerging LDF and government policy generally. A review should include the following: -

- A survey of the conservation area including a full photographic survey to aid possible enforcement action;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, and how successful this has been;
- The identification of any new issues which need to be addressed, requiring further actions or enhancements;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publication of an updated edition of management plan.

4.2 On an annual basis the Council will monitor the status of its conservation area management plans with regard to their need to be reviewed.

4.3 It is possible that the local community, under the guidance of a heritage consultant or the Council, could carry out this review. This would enable the local community to become more involved with the process and would raise public consciousness of the issues, including the problems associated with enforcement.

4.4 This will monitor the changes that have occurred through the continuous processes of development and through individual changes of use. The purpose is to re-evaluate the special character of a conservation area to reach decisions about whether it still warrants designation, and to check that the boundaries are sufficiently clear in demarcating changes in character.

4.5 It is intended that a photographic record be made of each area at the time of the publication of the Appraisal or the time of its reissue following a review, so that changes are monitored.

# Appendix 1: Wombourne Conservation Area appraisal

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# 1. Summary

## 1.1 It is the conclusion of this Character Appraisal of the Wombourne Conservation Area that its key characteristics are:

- A large rural village lying on the edge of the large industrial conurbation of the Black Country;
- A fine historic parish church situated next to a large open space resembling a village green;
- A village centre which extends down to Wom Brook which has a strong rural character, especially along stretches without houses on either side and with mature trees;
- A gentle hillside location and winding roads which reinforce the rural character;
- A topography which offers far reaching views out of the area to the south, and of the St Benedict Biscop Church spire;
- Several historic buildings including a couple of surviving timber framed structures which date from the 16th or 17th centuries;
- Many buildings which feature use of the colour red, with sandstone walls and red brick elevations;
- Rural tracks which bound and bisect the village and provide a peaceful setting while affording extensive views across the countryside;
- A bustling village, with a steady stream of shoppers using the facilities;
- Mid- to late 20th century insertions, in the form of shopping parades and modern residential developments;
- A constant flow of traffic which passes through the village using the cricket ground as a roundabout; an impression reinforced by extensive fencing and railings around its perimeter;
- A main focal point provided by the Church of St Benedict Biscop, with its majestic scale heightened by its location next to large open spaces on the hillside in the centre of the settlement.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 The Wombourne Conservation Area

2.1.1 Staffordshire County Council designated the Wombourne Conservation Area in November 1971. The Conservation Area covers the historic core of Wombourne and extends south to include a stretch of the Wom Brook. Currently, the designated boundary runs along School Road in the north to include the buildings on Windmill Bank and the churchyard of St Benedict Biscop. The boundary then runs south to include the subsequent modern developments in Old Vicarage Close, Manor Gardens and Arbourtrees Court, continues south to the Wom Brook and then west along its banks before turning north to include Walk House, The Maltings and the buildings on Gravel Hill. The boundary then connects with Maypole Street and Windmill Bank, completing a circle. Therefore, the Conservation Area includes the grassed area at the centre of the village, the church and the old High Street, which form the historic core of the village.

2.1.2 The limited size of the historic core, and the few historic buildings within it, points to the fact that this was originally a very small settlement. Although there were a number of horticultural shows and fairs throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, there was no market charter for the village and Wombourne has always essentially been a small residential community relying on small industry or agriculture. The growth of large towns and cities near to Wombourne has led to a substantial development of estates all around the historic core and even within it. Wombourne has struggled to retain its individual rural character in the light of this development pressure, although the small shops and village green-style open space encircled by narrow winding lanes still show that the village sensibilities have been retained to some extent.

### 2.2 The purpose of a conservation area character appraisal

2.2.1 Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning

(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

2.2.2 Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

2.2.3 Planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment are set out in *Planning Policy Statement No.5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5). In addition, guidance to help practitioners implement this policy is provided in the accompanying *Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide*.

2.2.4 In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Wombourne Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It is in conformity with English Heritage guidance as set out in *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* and *Guidance on the management of conservation areas* (both August 2005).

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the Wombourne Conservation Area and identify the issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area (in the form of the 'Character Appraisal');

2.2.5 The Conservation Studio carried out survey work for this document in November 2006, when a full photographic record was also taken of the area and its buildings. Unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution, trees, water courses, historic shop fronts, views and areas and buildings for enhancement were noted amongst other matters and recorded on

a Townscape Appraisal Map. Additionally the existing boundary of the Conservation Area was carefully surveyed and proposals drawn up for a number of changes. The omission of any particular feature does not imply that it is of no significance.

## **2.3 The planning policy context**

2.3.1 This document should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework as set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands (revised January 2008); Staffordshire County Council's Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 and South Staffordshire Council's South Staffordshire Local Plan, which was adopted in December 1996 and will remain in force until an LDF replaces it eventually.

2.3.2 In the Local Plan, Inset Plan 54 confirms that the following policies apply to the Wombourne Conservation Area or to the land that surrounds it:

- Canal Conservation Area BE7, BE9, BE12 & BE14
- Conservation Area Policies BE7, BE9, BE12, BE14 – BE20
- Green Belt GB1, C1 – C4, C8 & C13
- Policies H12, BE26 & BE28

These policies are detailed in Appendix 2.

2.3.3 A Local Development Framework (LDF) is being prepared to help to shape a sustainable future for South Staffordshire. It will replace the existing Local Plan (adopted 1996) and set out the District's spatial planning strategy to 2026. The LDF will combine a number of statutory and non-statutory documents to set out planning policies and proposals to guide the District's development. The statutory ones are known as Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and, together with the West Midlands' Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), will form part of the Development Plan for South Staffordshire. For further information on the LDF please contact: The Development Plans Team on 01902 696317; email: [developmentplans@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:developmentplans@sstaffs.gov.uk).

## 3. Location & landscape setting

### 3.1 Location & activities

3.1.1 Wombourne village is in the south of the County of Staffordshire and lies directly west of the main A449 trunk road, five miles south of Wolverhampton, six miles north of Stourbridge and six miles east of Dudley. While the A449 provides a useful connection with the towns and cities that surround it, Wombourne's location between the highway and other settlements to the west, such as Trysull, mean that there is a steady and consistent volume of traffic through the village. The central green space, the cricket ground, acts as a large roundabout around which the traffic passes swiftly, particularly at rush hour. The size of nearby Wolverhampton results in a considerable amount of traffic that goes in and out of it everyday. Wombourne's location only five miles from the city, and six miles from the busy town of Dudley, means that its quiet rural character is unavoidably affected.

3.1.2 In the heart of Wombourne, along High Street and Maypole Street, is a steady trickle of mainly local people shopping or travelling by foot to their places of work. The village has a relaxed character that separates it from the pace of a township or city. Many of the residents make use of the frequent buses that stop in the village and give transport links to Brierley Hill, Kingswinford, Merry Hill, Stourbridge and Wolverhampton.

3.1.3 The sedate pace of the village is affected by the morning and evening rush hours. In particular the former produces an increase in foot and motor traffic. Older children attending the comprehensive school to the north of the village wander up Windmill Bank. Also, parents with pushchairs scale the hill towards the primary school on School Lane, returning shortly after school has begun.

3.1.4 Other key times in the centre of the village are during the summer months when cricket matches are played at the club. Despite there being railings and chain link fencing around the periphery of the ground, there are clear views across the pitch. The regular games bring energy to the village and evoke a strong sense of traditional community spirit. Wombourne cricket matches played in front of the parish church have been used in photographs, postcards and films to portray the quintessential English village scene.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Wombourne village centre
- Wombourne Cricket Club
- The Wom Brook

3.1.5 To the south, a park has been created around Wom Brook, along the watercourse and here the village's rural roots remain largely intact. The walk eastward along the brook is tree lined and peaceful, although views up the grass bank to the civic centre car park and the hulking community halls beyond have an urban appearance. A considerable amount of 20th century development has been inserted into what was a small rural village with plenty of large open spaces between buildings: often used as pasture or orchards. The infill of these areas is a reminder of the pressures to develop so close to the large conurbations of the West Midlands and the motivation for the legislation that brought in Green Belt Policy in the 20th century to protect the identity of our rural settlements from urban sprawl.

3.1.6 Although there are a couple of trinket shops and tearooms in the village, the majority of shops are day-to-day services: restaurants, banks, video shops, solicitors and bakeries. There is not a great tourist trade here due to the distance from the canal and the lack of any specific tourist attraction in the village. It is essentially a busy village centre with a historic core, that retains a special character, and that has a mix of shops, offices, commercial and professional services as well as residential uses

## 3.2 Topography & geology

3.2.1 Wombourne lies on a gentle slope in the rolling countryside of South Staffordshire. The terrain rises to the north so that the Church of St Benedict's Biscop towers over the village centre with the large open area of the cricket ground below it. This is reminiscent of a village green although for many centuries they acted as the grounds to a large house. The green has been levelled so that High Street, which lies to the south and curves around its borders, appears sunken below the level of the grass behind an embankment. The ground continues to fall away to the shallow valley floor where the Wom Brook flows. This small tributary runs from the northeast down towards the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal in the southeast by Giggety Bridge at the bottom of Planks Lane. Another brook, called Small Brook, at one time ran through the village along High Street and joined the Wom Brook below Walk Lane. It was referred to in 1416, but is now contained within pipes below the surface of the road.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Wombourne High Street
- The churchyard, which is elevated above the church
- Looking down Gravel Hill towards the Wom Brook

3.2.2 However, Wombourne's historic watery surroundings were important resources for the industry and amenity of the area in past times and create the verdant backdrop to the settlement: water meadows and tree lined hills surround the village, especially to the south where less infill development has occurred.

3.2.3 The underlying rock in the area is Keuper Sandstone, which is common to this part of South Staffordshire. It has been used as a building stone for the parish church. However, due to the softness of the material it is mainly used in boundary walls rather than for building of large structures. There is some boulder clay to the north of the village and this would have been suitable for the production of bricks although there is no record of brick kilns in the village itself. To the southeast is a ridge of sand and gravel, hence the name Gravel Hill. The soil is light loam.

### 3.3 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

3.3.1 Modern development and major roads encircle the Wombourne Conservation Area. Beyond this, major cities and towns lie to the east and other large villages and towns lie to the north, south and west. The village is on the very edge of the West Midlands Urban Area and marks the limit of the extension of large metropolitan areas such as Dudley. Although Wombourne lies six miles to the west of the centre of Dudley, the town has spread so much that only a small green corridor and the A449 separates the two. As a result, some urban character has spilt over into the village, a common occurrence in settlements near to the border of busy metropolitan areas in England.

3.3.2 However, despite the introduction of a density and design of infill development that is not characteristic of a rural village, Wombourne has resisted some forms of change. The visual focus of the community is still centred on the church and the existence of generous open areas around it has not been completely lost.

3.3.3 The areas to the west have retained a more rural character and where the Black Country to the east has grown into a modern townscape,



the region heading towards Shropshire and Ironbridge is still dotted with villages and smaller towns. The views to the south of Wombourne are filled with tree covered hillsides and the water meadows that line the brook and lead to the canal network. This character contrasts with the modern urban influences that are to be found elsewhere in the settlement and shows how much a village can change with 50 years of development.

#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Urban style in Manor Gardens
- Modern bungalow development off Mill Lane

## 4. Historic development & archaeology

### 4.1 Historic development

4.1.1 Although there is no recorded settlement at Wombourne in Saxon times, it seems likely that some communities remained after the Roman camps in the area were abandoned by the 5th century. The discovery of four barrows in Wombourne Parish in the 18th century led the antiquary Richard Wilkes to conclude that the Common had been the site of the famous Battle of Tettenhall, despite the location being around six miles from the present day village of Tettenhall. In 910 AD the battle was an important victory for the Mercian and Wessex alliance against the Vikings and heralded the end of invasions in England from the north. The exact location of the battlefield is still unknown and Wilkes' theory led to the area directly south east of the current village being called 'Battlefield' from the 19th century.

4.1.2 The earliest records show that in pre-Conquest Wombourne, Turstin, a Saxon Thane or Lord, held seven hides of land and administered the law in the area through the ancient right of sac and soc. A hide was an early measurement of land based on yield rather than size. One hide would produce enough food to support one household. This would equate to between six and twelve hectares, depending on fertility. By 1086, Domesday recorded that there were 26 people living in Wombourne and that there was a church already established. William Fitzansculf, lord of Dudley, held this and neighbouring manors descended through the Dudley and Sutton families over the next few centuries. Cultivation was already extensive in the 11th century with eight plough teams at Wombourne working the light soil.

4.1.3 The overlords presided over a sparsely populated area that relied solely on the produce of the land for its sustenance. The Wom Brook, which gave the village and parish its name, provided the power for two mills by 1086. The village appears to have changed little during medieval times and the parish still only had 37 households by 1563. However, the village began to take shape by this time as references to a green are recorded in the 13th and 14th centuries. Also, farming had developed to include the growing of rye, barley, peas and oats as well as the grazing of goats and sheep by the 14th century.



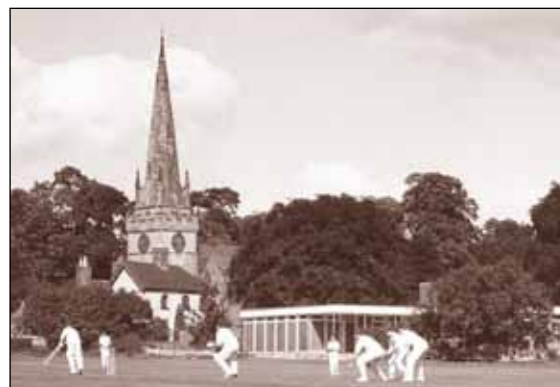
#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Speed's Map of Staffordshire, 1610, showing Wombourne
- High Street, Wombourne - historic photograph
- High Street, with laden hay wagons in front of Millbrook House

4.1.4 From this time the village had access to a good trading route: the road between Stafford and Worcester (now the A449) skirts the village. The manor was regularly traded by the 16th and 17th centuries until it was sold to Walter Wrottesley in 1641 and, along with other land in neighbouring villages such as Swindon, was passed down to successive Wrottesleys into the 19th century.

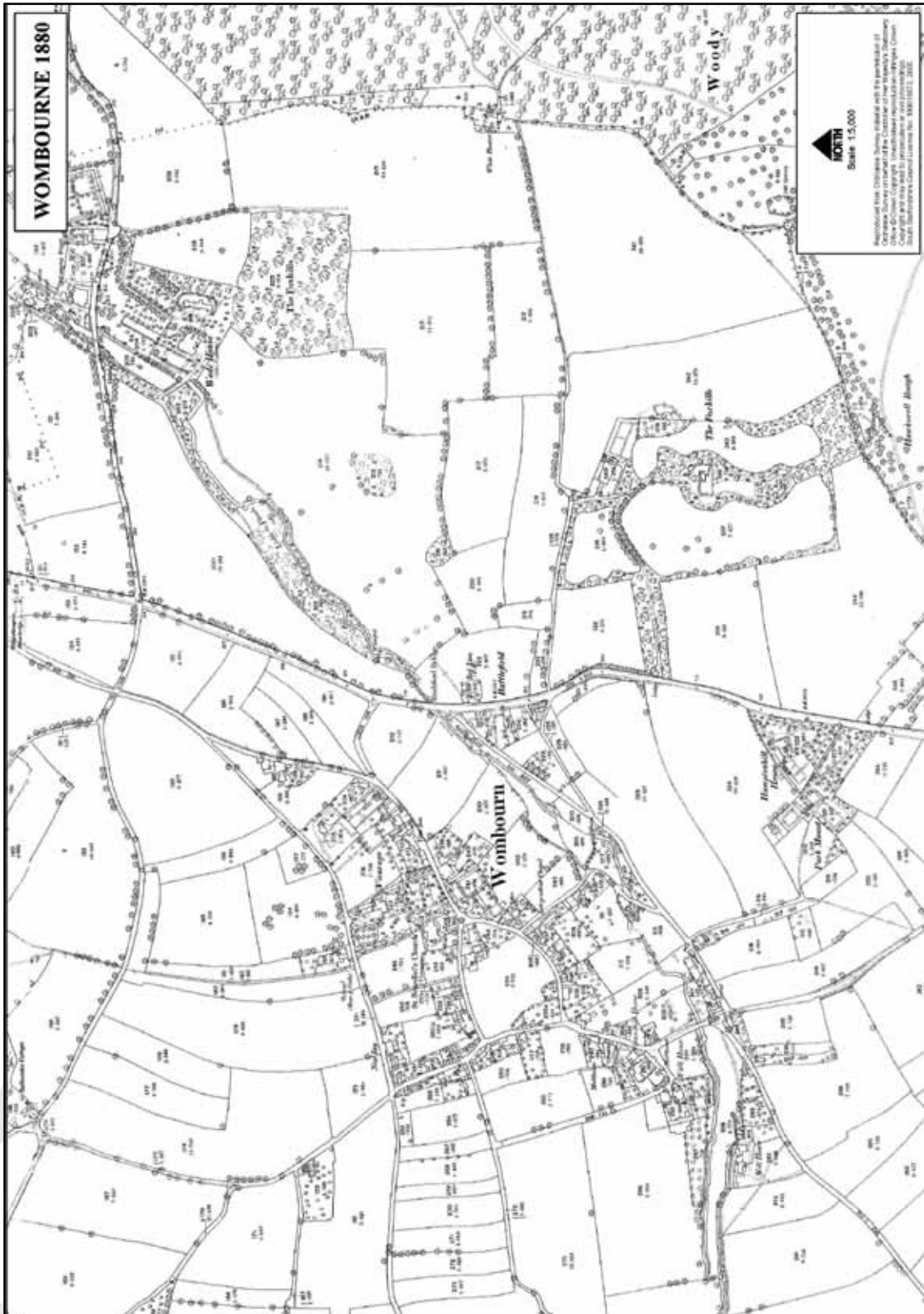
4.1.5 The population of Wombourne only began to increase rapidly when the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal was constructed west of the village by James Brindley and opened in November 1770. It was at this time that the people of Wombourne became established as nailers. Nail making was concentrated in and around the village from the early part of the century and the population rose steadily to reach 1,530 (in the township) and 2,236 (in the parish) by 1861. Iron making had come to the area in the late 16th century and there was a hammer mill at Greensforge in 1602. By this time there were three forges in the parish and iron making continued until 1976. However, the early 19th century proved to be a golden era for the village - there were 18 nailshops in Wombourne, some of them in the centre of the village and a nail warehouse in Rookery Lane. The nail trade declined after the 1850s and many people were forced to move elsewhere to find employment. There were no nailers left in the parish at all by 1889.

4.1.6 Despite this decline, Wombourne continued to have a successful horticultural industry that had grown steadily. Market gardens were introduced in the 18th century and crops such as parsnips and turnips have been grown ever since. Natural resources were also exploited in the area from the 19th century as sand and gravel pits were dug. Quarries were not worked out until the end of the 20th century. Also, milling continued successfully in the area from medieval times through to the 20th century, harnessing the power of both the Wom Brook (at the nearby Wodehouse) and the Smestow Brook at Smestow Mill, as well as the wind, as windmills stood at various locations around the parish, including one on School Road in 1840. Another important industry was that of malting, which initially took place at Woodhouse in the 17th century where the corn mill had been converted into a malthouse, and then in Walk Lane by 1861.



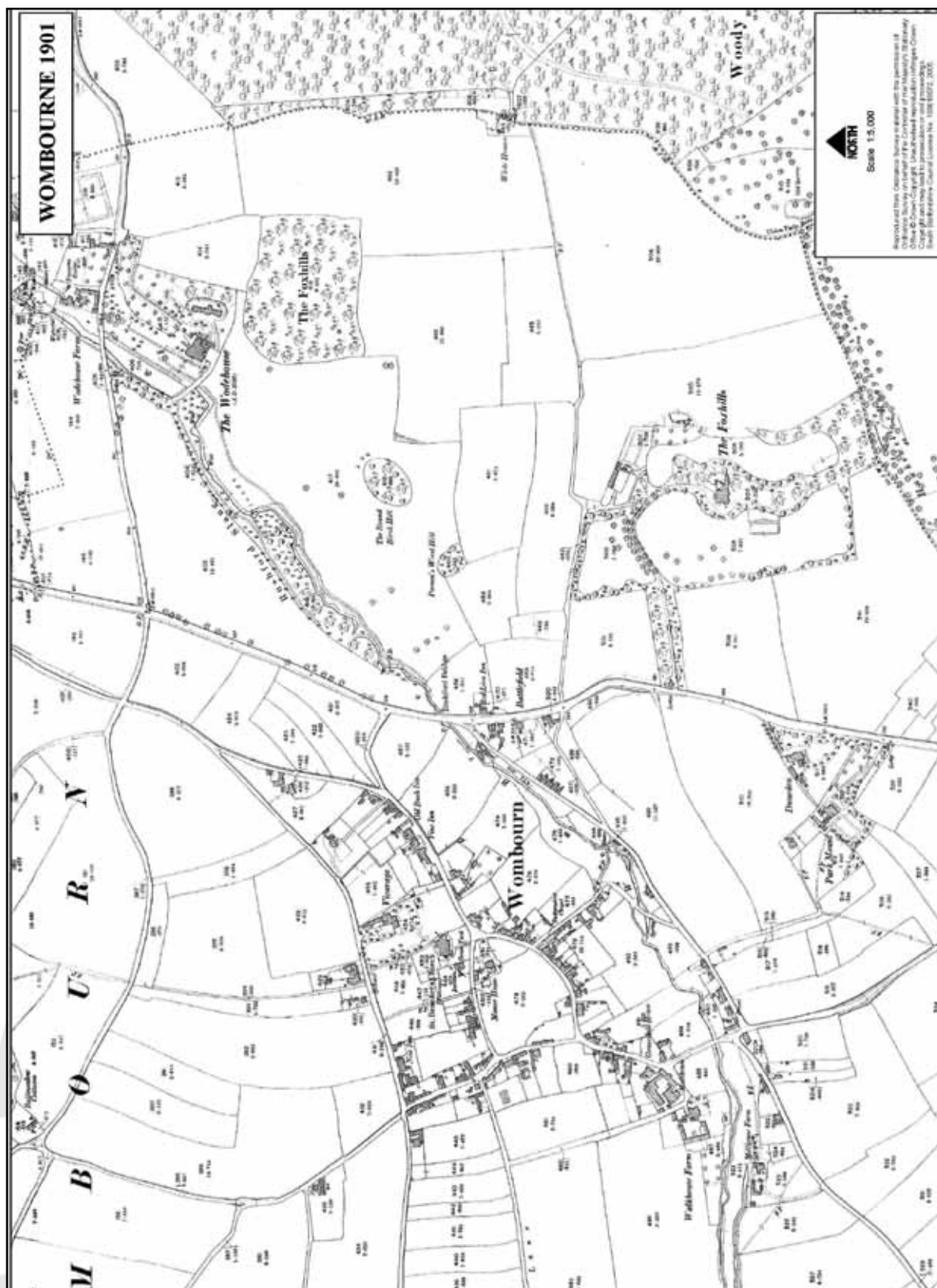
### Images from Top to Bottom

- Quintessentially English - cricket on Wombourne Green in the 1930s
- St Benedict Biscop's Church - backdrop to a cricket match in the 1960s
- View across Battlefield Lane and Rushford Bridge in the early 1900s
- Growing but still rural - Wombourne in the 1950s



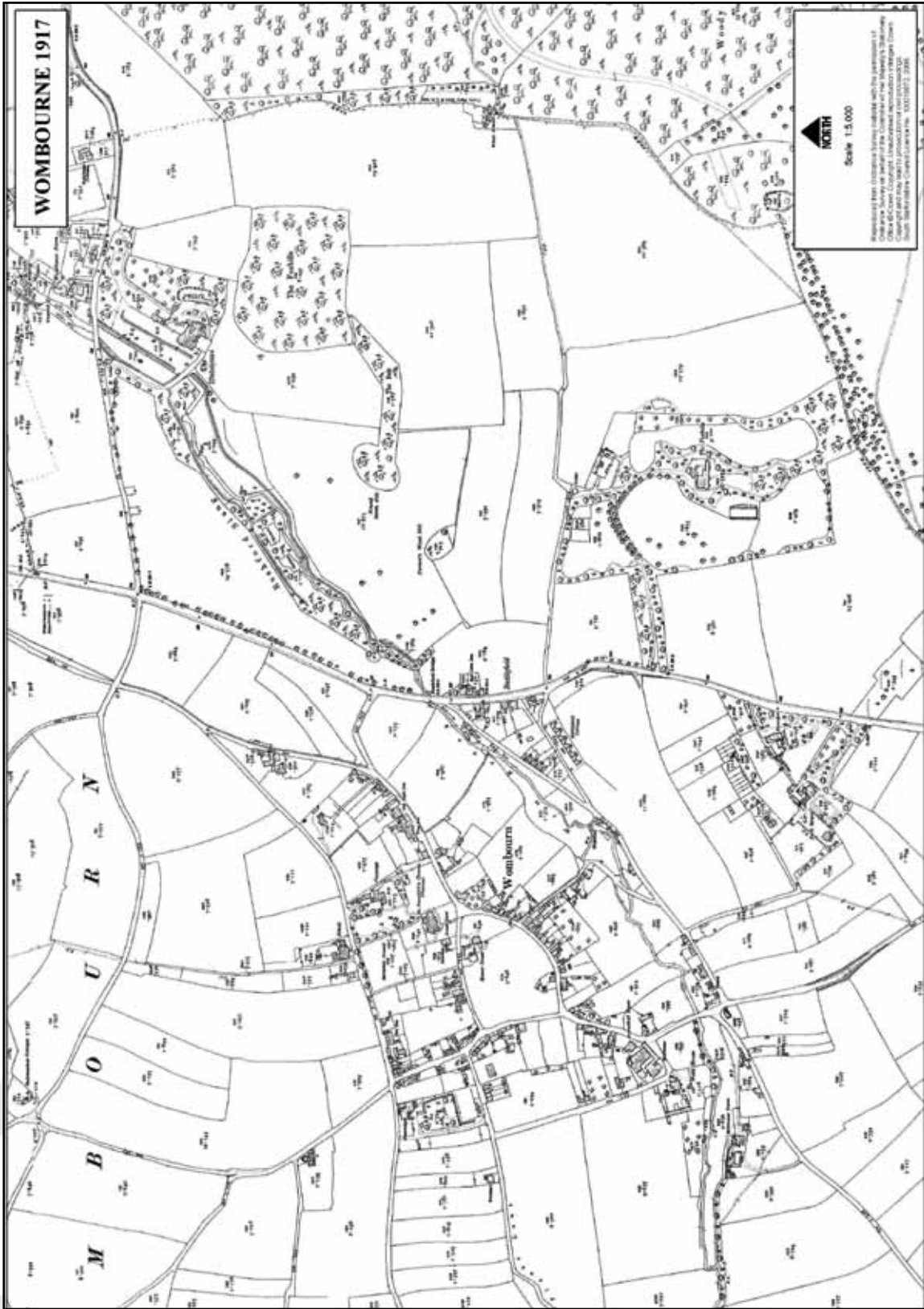
## Image

- Wombourne - Ordnance Survey Map 1880



## Image

- Wombourne - Ordnance Survey Map 1901



## Image

- Wombourne - Ordnance Survey Map 1917

South Staffordshire Council

**Wombourne Conservation Area**

Townscape Appraisal Map

(Not to scale)

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. (1800186572) (2008)





4.1.7 During the boom period of the mid 19th century a strong sense of community developed in the village, which is evidenced by the formation of a Cricket Club (c.1860), a Reading Association (1854) and the Wombourne Mutual Improvement Society (1863). The Associations acted as lending libraries and organised regular social evenings and concerts at the National School in School Road. Also at this time there was a choral society, a rifle band and, during the 1870s, the Wombourne Cottagers' Horticultural Society, which held annual flower and vegetable shows. Many other societies established themselves in this busy community at this time, mostly involved in rural pursuits. The church was rebuilt twice and remained as a beacon of the village's prosperity. Also, a National School had been built to the west of the Church in 1833 and this was supplemented by four private day schools in Wombourne in the same year. The active community led to the formation of an industrious parish council, which formed a fire brigade in 1898.

4.1.8 Due in part to the downturn in the nail trade during the later 19th century, no railway line was initially built to serve Wombourne. However, work on the Wolverhampton & Bridgnorth Railway began in 1913. Wartime shortages of labour and materials called a halt to this in 1916, but work resumed in 1921, and the line opened on 11 May 1925. The station was north of Bratch Road and, therefore, was a considerable walking distance from the centre of the village. The scheme was short lived and passenger services were withdrawn on 31 October 1932, and the line was last used on 24 June 1965. The track was lifted between June 1967 and January 1968, and the route now provides another kind of amenity to the local people in the form of the South Staffordshire Railway Walk, a ten-mile rural hike.

4.1.9 During the early 20th century Wombourne's population began to rise again as it established itself as a convenient dormitory settlement close to the large industrial conurbations of Wolverhampton, Dudley and Stourbridge.

4.1.10 The proximity of the A449 became an increasing benefit to those who needed to commute to work. The interwar period saw the prominence of Wombourne rise on the local political map as the Seisdon Rural District Council relocated there from Trysull in the early 1930s. Local traditions such as the annual flower show were revived and continued until the late 1960s. In the ten years following 1951, the parish's population grew from 3,838 to 9,974 and in 1968 a magistrate's court was opened in the village. In 1976 the newly formed South Staffordshire District Council relocated to Codsall, however, it remains one of the largest villages in the country with many modern estates, council and private, having been built, and a considerable amount of light industry and factories becoming established on its periphery.

## 4.2 Archaeology

4.2.1 There is the suggestion of prehistoric settlement in the area from the discovery of post-Mesolithic flints in nearby Greensforge Farm. However, communities were generally transient in this era, being grouped into bands of hunter-gatherers, and would rarely have settled in one area for long, but moved around with the seasons and the opportunities to find food and other provisions. It is possible that settlements were established late in the Neolithic era when farming techniques began to be established. The area is abundant with rich fertile soil that is particularly suitable for cultivation.

4.2.2 No significant Roman finds have been found in Wombourne, although a Roman road ran through the southwest of the parish and 2nd century pottery has been discovered at Greensforge Farm.

## 5. Spatial analysis

### 5.1 Plan, form & layout

5.1.1 The Wombourne Conservation Area has retained its historic layout with the central feature being the network of roads (Maypole Street, Church Road and High Street) encircling the cricket ground. No buildings line the cricket ground itself, although a clubhouse and pavilion are contained within it. Instead, buildings face the grassed area from the opposite side of the roads that follow its perimeter. There are, and always have been, significant gaps between buildings along these roads, although there are tighter groups along High Street and to the north of Maypole Street. Many of the traditionally open areas now have large complexes of modern flats. The clubhouse stands on or near the site of a building marked on early maps as Manor House. This house was formerly known as Old Hall and owned by the Marsh family from at least the mid 17th century. Although a manor house at this location close to the parish church would conform to the traditional layout of a village, the Marshes were not lords of the Manor and this was merely another residential property, one that was demolished in 1968. The grounds were eventually gifted to the village for use as a playing field by the Shaw-Hellier family.

5.1.2 Four roads extend away from the green: High Street, Mill Lane, Gravel Hill and Windmill Bank. These contain buildings of various ages and represent the further reaches of the village settlement. Some buildings on the top of Windmill Bank were built in the 19th century, although they are much altered. The windmill is long since demolished, and the library, which stood halfway down the bank, has also been replaced, this time with new apartments. There is still some open space in this part of the village, including a small area of gardens, although the majority is given over to car parking. In the 19th and early 20th century there was a row of houses on the corner of Windmill Bank and Church Road, which would have given a more solid gateway to the village centre from this direction. The only building there now is the detached public conveniences. Therefore, a feature of the layout in Wombourne is that much open land has been infilled, while land that was historically built upon has been cleared.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Roads encircling the cricket ground
- Windmill Bank
- Wombourne Civic Centre

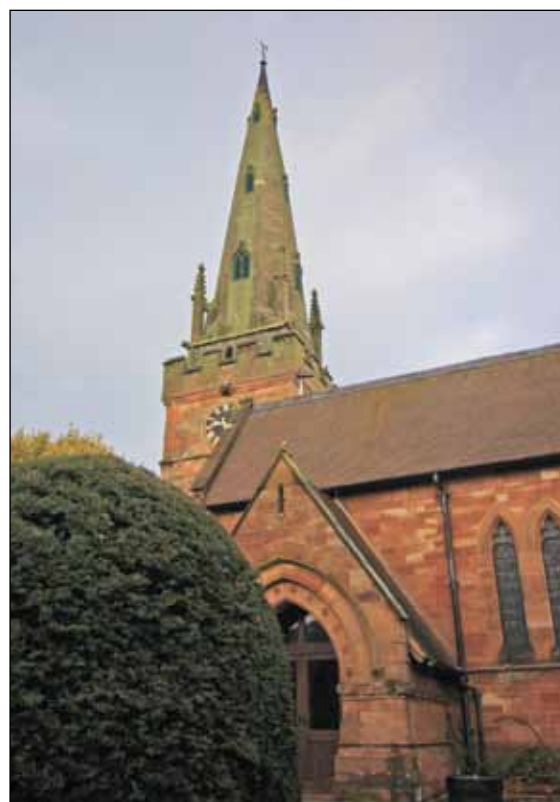
5.1.3 On the eastern side of Gravel Hill most of the open land has been built over, with the large Civic Centre serving the community, and a group of housing on the site of a previous single detached house. However, the broad sweep of the road down to the Wom Brook and the large green area in front of Walk House has been retained for the amenity of all. Other large detached houses such as Gravel Hill House mark the corner of Walk Lane and Gravel Hill. The broad junction is one of the historic gateways to the village. The new complex of flats The Maltings is on the site of the former malthouse and retains the orientation, if not the scale or appearance of the former buildings.

5.1.4 High Street has also been considerably built up in recent years. The north side beyond the Church was originally the grounds and orchards of the vicarage, but now contains flats. Other blocks of flats and a modern police station are on the southern side of the road. Beyond, a large detached historic public house, The Vine, stands facing a modest parish hall that abuts the large field, which runs down to Rushford Bridge. The buildings then peter out on the northern side of High Street, with another pub and some large modern houses.

5.1.5 Mill Lane is the narrowest and least used of the roads extending from the centre of the village. It leads down to the Wom Brook with a few modern houses in between and the much altered Mill Lane Farmhouse. Scant evidence of a mill remains in the Wom Brook and the road joins up with Rookery Road to the south. The deviating courses of both Mill Lane and Rookery Road highlight that they are long established.

## 5.2 Landmarks, focal points & views

5.2.1 St Benedict Biscop's Church is the principal landmark in the area and provides a focal point for the centre of the village. The tower, which dates to the 14th century, is built of the locally characteristic pink sandstone that firmly places the village in Staffordshire. Its height – emphasised by the tall spire and its position on the hillside – and its breadth, combine to make a handsome structure that can be seen from many key points throughout the village and beyond. The sound of its bells, chiming every quarter-hour, also resonates throughout the settlement and helps impose a traditional



### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Vine Public House
- St Benedict Biscop's Church
- Wombourne Cricket Ground

village character on Wombourne. Furthermore, the retention of such a large churchyard around the church has retained a significant amount of open space at this key location. While other areas such as the vicarage gardens have been built over, the continuation of the churchyard use has helped limit the encroaching urbanisation of Wombourne.

5.2.2 Similarly, the large open space of the cricket ground opposite has been retained. This land is as much a local landmark as the church, and the two features combine to create a distinctive scene. The flat surface of the cricket ground affords views across to the historic buildings that line High Street and the wooded landscape beyond in the valley. The southern views out of Wombourne are incredibly important in shaping the rural feeling that is barely maintained in the village. The gap between buildings used as a car park in High Street is vital for continuing this important link to the village's rural heritage.

5.2.3 The most significant views are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map (see pp. 24-25).

### 5.3 Open spaces, trees & landscape

5.3.1 While many open spaces have been lost in Wombourne, these are mainly pieces of pasture and orchards that were on private land ever since the land was enclosed. Some private land, such as the corner of Windmill Bank and the cricket ground, has been opened up to the view of the village, if not necessarily made available for public use. Large open green areas also remain around the Wom Brook. Its banks and surrounding grass are well maintained, with picnic benches and a good path for public use. Trees also line the brook and help create the rich green backdrop to the village. Some mature specimens also are to be found in the churchyard and behind the old telephone exchange. A number of mature trees are also dotted about the perimeter of the cricket ground. Some are also within the ground itself, particularly to the west end, which is shown as being wooded or an orchard on the Ordnance Survey map of 1880. Few trees line the far side of roads around the cricket ground, due to the narrow pavement and the close proximity of the frontages of buildings to the road.

5.3.2 The most significant specimens are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map (see pp. 24-25).



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Mature trees line the cricket ground
- St Benedict Biscop's Church framed by trees
- Church Road twists and narrows into Maypole Street

5.3.3 The landscape has undergone change, with the central part of the gentle hillside being sculpted into a plateau based around the cricket ground, helping create the village's special visual character. The higher ground level at the north of the green accentuates the visual prominence of the church. The southern part of the Conservation Area nestles in a dell and is covered in trees fed by watery land crisscrossed by brooks. This creates a visual bed of green that confers a special rural character, which is rare so close to major industrial centres.

## 5.4 Public realm

5.4.1 The public realm the pavements, footpaths, street surfaces, street lighting and signage are mainly modern in style and fabric. Few traditional details remain, although there have been some attempts to refurbish features in a traditional manner.

### *Paving*

5.4.2 The pavements are standard concrete slabs or tarmac, which do not enhance the setting of the Conservation Area. The kerbs, which are not the traditional granite, are thin (150mm) and made of concrete. There is also a certain amount of tegula blockwork, a large amount of which is located around the maypole on Windmill Bank.

### *Road treatments*

5.4.3 Few traffic-calming measures have been introduced into Wombourne. Instead, the speed of traffic is reduced by the historic layout of narrow winding streets. These features form 'natural' chicanes (the effect is enhanced by the close proximity of buildings to the highway), which manage traffic more effectively than any modern methods such as humps, and reduce the need for signage and road markings. However, modern highway features, such as traffic islands and prominent kerbing has limited the width of roads further and those around The Green operate under a one-way system. This has the effect of making the cricket ground a roundabout. While this set up manages traffic movement well, it also negates some the chicane effect because drivers are able to gain more speed when there is no oncoming traffic to negotiate. Zebra crossings have been laid at most of the major junctions around the cricket ground to aid pedestrians crossing the busy roads.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Stepped kerbing in High Street
- Streetlamp on Church Road
- Modern street furniture in Windmill Bank

### **Street lighting**

5.4.4 The majority of streetlights are in the 1960s 'hockey-stick' style. These do not complement the historic village character. Some other style lamps can be found on Windmill Bank, which have a standard lantern style lamp. There are also some of these located on High Street outside Arbourtrees House next to modern lamp standards that have been erected without the removal of the older units. The new standards are much taller and have ovoid lamps that overhang the highway and form part of a zebra crossing. In the core of the village along Church Road and down Gravel Hill there are newer street lamps with a traditional lantern style that complements the village character in a more successful manner. Many of these lamps have chains dangling from them that show that hanging baskets have at some point been hung from them, adding a splash of colour to the village street scene.

5.4.5 In conservation terms it would be ideal if a traditional height and style lamp were introduced across the area. This would maintain the important relationship of scale between the streetlamps, the houses and the trees in the Conservation Area. As part of a local authority's duty to preserve and enhance the character of their conservation areas it should be recognised that these designated areas are special and may have different needs to other areas. The introduction of overlarge standards, with no effort to marry the design to the character of the area detracts from the character of the area. The height of standards is particularly critical because it can mean that the features visually compete with the roofline of the houses, as well as conflict with the crowns of trees, themselves vital features of a conservation area.

### **Street signs**

5.4.6 All street name signs are plastic mounted on freestanding poles on the pavement. Some modern street signage, such as that advertising parking restrictions, is of small size, which reduces the impact on the Conservation Area. Other signs are larger and clutter the street scene, especially at the road junctions around the cricket ground.

### **Other features**

5.4.7 Telephone boxes are all modern in style and the post boxes are all 20th century. The remaining public realm: electricity cabinets, litterbins, bus shelters and benches are all of modern design. Public rubbish bins are also modern and either attached to lampposts or freestanding. Some large wheelie bins are used by commercial premises and large blocks of flats and are scattered around the Conservation Area, often in vivid hues of red or blue.



### **Images from Top to Bottom**

- Conventional street lights in Plank Lane
- Pillar box and remains of a stamp machine outside the Post Office in High Street
- Bench by the Wom Brook

## 6. The buildings of the Conservation Area

### 6.1 Building types

6.1.1 The buildings within the Wombourne Conservation Area were mainly built as dwellings although many are now used for commercial purposes. Also, a number of large community buildings, such as the church and civic centre are scattered throughout.

6.1.2 The earliest domestic buildings are to be found on High Street and date from the 17th and 18th centuries. Some have 19th century additions and as a result there is a variation in roof heights and styles of façade. However, these and the other historic buildings in the Conservation Area are generally two storey and brick built. Along the High Street and the north part of Maypole Street they have been constructed close up against each other to form terraces. In the southern part of Maypole Street extending down to Gravel Hill, there are more gaps between buildings. The houses begin to take on a slightly grander scale, and are largely detached, rather than terraced. The detached villa properties have generous plots, although some have been built on at the rear, resulting in a cluttering of the views between buildings, such as at Maypole Court, with structures of no particular architectural merit. In the case of the area behind Maypole House, the use of the land for caravans has little or no impact on the character of the Conservation Area as the area is shielded from view by fencing. The lack of tall structures at this location enhances the rural feel of this stretch of Maypole Street with the views of trees and sky between the buildings remaining. On the High Street a small courtyard development of shops, Walkers' Way, has been inserted behind one of the listed buildings. While the buildings are modern and perhaps slightly too overdressed for the facades, the whole effect is one of a welcoming cluster of buildings and the approach through a carriage arch suits the historic village location. Also, they do not interrupt any views in or out of the Conservation Area.

6.1.3 The earlier timber framed buildings that would have lined the streets around the cricket ground have not survived, as they have in some of the other settlements in South Staffordshire. However, these earlier buildings would have been humble dwellings scattered around the fields that ran into the centre of the village.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Shops and houses in Maypole Street
- Walkers' Way
- A range of buildings styles in Church Road

6.1.4 The buildings that replaced them as Wombourne became industrialised, housed the burgeoning community of nail makers and, by the 19th century, further rows of houses were located on Windmill Bank. These have now been replaced by rows of mid-20th century shops set behind areas for car parking on the west side, and community centre and new houses on the east. At the top of Windmill Bank a few remnants of the 19th century character remain with a short row of shops that hugs the mouth of the junction with School Road. These buildings lie at the top of the hill and, therefore, dominate the street below.

6.1.5 The majority of houses on School Road are modern, either bungalows or two-storey, with the notable exceptions of a pair of late 19th century houses on the corner of Windmill Bank and No. 18 which lies next to the original site of The New Inn, now redeveloped. Further new development lies scattered around the Conservation Area, in the form of individual houses such as at Old Vicarage Close or as large blocks of flats such as at Manor Gardens. The former are all single or two-storey and blend in with both the landscape and character of this essentially rural settlement. The larger developments sometimes rise to four-storeys and are of a scale that is out of keeping with both the character and appearance of the area. The large blocks have a resolutely urban character, as does the modern civic centre, although the latter has an interesting roof profile and is of a lower height.

6.1.6 The Church of St Benedict Biscop is the most significant building in terms of age and scale in the Conservation Area. It dominates the community both visually and in terms of its influence. The spire is visible from many vantage points, and the Wombourne Institute lies next to it, providing a squat solid counterfoil to the soaring tower. Next to it the sprawling telephone exchange - now used as an evangelical church. Further west along Church Road, short rows of houses cluster close to the highway. They reflect the type of buildings on the opposite side of the cricket ground and are built of traditional materials but are mostly not of any significant age. The land behind the buildings contains the modern development Carrier's Fold, which features tightly packed terraces arranged over varying heights that have features such as dormers and dentil cornices. Their design appears to try to create a stable courtyard effect.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- 19th Century shops in Windmill Bank
- Old Vicarage Close
- Carrier's Fold

## 6.2 Listed buildings

6.2.1 A listed building is one that is included on the government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. Law protects these buildings and consent is required from South Staffordshire Council before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out. Further information can be found in South Staffordshire Council's South Staffordshire Local Plan, adopted in December 1996.

6.2.2 There are 6 listed buildings or structures in the Wombourne Conservation Area. They are all listed Grade II:

- Church of St Benedict Biscop
- Gravel Hill Bridge
- No. 6 Gravel Hill
- Wombourne House and Millbrook (under one listing), High Street
- No. 12 High Street
- No. 7 Maypole Street

6.2.3 The Church of St Benedict Biscop is, in part, the oldest building in the Conservation Area. Its tower is its earliest feature and makes the most striking impression on the locality. The mellow salmon red sandstone blocks of the tower rise to a stone spire, which is decorated with pinnacles and ogee hooded windows. It rises to a peak topped by a weather vane and is covered in green algae as a result of the high, windy location. Except for the north aisle, which is from the 16th century, the rest of the church dates from the time it was rebuilt in 1866-7 to the designs of G E Street. The use of sandstone ashlar is continued, although other features such as lancet windows are used on the long body of the church, which faces the road. There is an important visual separation of the church from the road by the small churchyard (there is a much larger one at the rear), which is lined by a low sandstone wall itself built of a more yellow shade of stone than the church. This separation, or green girdle, around the church gives it a detachment from the village and accentuates the height and scale of the tower, spire and nave.

6.2.4 The 18th century Gravel Hill Bridge traverses Wom Brook and despite having a largely rebuilt parapet retains an original red brick arch in English bond with stone dressings. It represents a



### Images from Top to Bottom

- No. 6 Gravel Hill
- St Benedict's Church
- Gravel Hill Bridge

gateway to the village as well as the Conservation Area as the road crosses the brook and heads up Gravel Hill. Beyond a fine high red sandstone wall is No. 6 Gravel Hill, a red brick house dated 1768. This detached historic building adds an 18th century flourish to the Conservation Area. It has a fine, but relatively plain façade with pilasters at either corner leading up to a dentil cornice at eaves level and fancy flat arches with fluted keystone dressings on the ground floor windows. However, the subtle details such as the penny pointing in the narrow joints running through the rusty red brickwork clash alarmingly with the heavy handed, chunky uPVC windows that have been inserted in the building. The replacement of windows appears to have damaged the brickwork between the storeys, which has been repaired using thickly applied mortar and reclaimed brick.

6.2.5 Further north, No. 7 Maypole Street is an important remnant of Wombourne's agricultural past, being a former farmhouse and school. It is dated 1743 and has 19th and 20th century alterations and additions, which give it a pleasantly haphazard appearance. The original building's design is similar to No.6 Gravel Hill, although it has been altered to form offices and has dormers inserted in the roof. It also has a small front garden, a domestic feature on commercial premises that is mirrored by other unlisted properties along Maypole Street. The boundary walls themselves are mentioned in the listing title along with the outbuilding, hinting at the positive contribution the whole set piece makes to the character of the Conservation Area.

6.2.6 The listed buildings in High Street directly abut to the pavement and, at three-storeys tall, Wombourne House and Millbrook peer over the street and cricket ground. These attached buildings were originally one 18th century house, and the right hand side is an early 19th century addition. The two separate buildings function as a surgery and a shop with living accommodation or offices above. The later addition ties in well with the original building although there are some notable differences in appearance. Wombourne House is the plainer of the two with only segmental arches on the windows and a dentil cornice for decoration. Millbrook, on the other hand, has external shutters on the front windows and iron balconies on the



### Images from Top to Bottom

- No. 7 Maypole Street
- Wombourne House/Millbrook terminate this row of historic buildings
- Netley House

side elevation. There also some other features, such as a traditional fire plaque, shop signage and some modern floodlights. The sheer, tall elevations contrast with other buildings on the High Street, which are often shorter, with dainty dormers and projecting bays. The other listed building on High Street, No. 12, is one of these more modestly scaled buildings. It is a 17th century timber framed cottage with brick infilled panels. It is petite, only rising to a single storey with an attic, which has tall dormers breaking through the eaves of its tiled roof.

6.2.7 The church was listed in the 1960s and the others at the listing resurvey in 1987, except No.7 Maypole Street, which was listed in 1994.

### 6.3 Locally listed buildings

6.3.1 The Council is compiling a Local List for South Staffordshire, and is encouraging nominations from the public. The following have already been suggested for Wombourne:

In the Wombourne Conservation Area:

- Gravel Hill: Gravel Hill House, Grey Cottage, No. 5, Netley House, Maypole House;
- High Street: United Reform Church;
- Walk Lane: Walk House.

Not in the Wombourne Conservation Area:

- Rookery Road: Nos. 115 and 123 and Meadow View;
- School Road: Nos. 18 and 25.

6.3.2 Some of these have been identified as 'positive' buildings (see below) as part of this appraisal. It might well be that the Council adds further buildings to the Local List, in addition to those already suggested, once this appraisal has been formally adopted. This issue is considered in the Management Proposals.

### 6.4 Positive buildings

6.4.1 In addition to listed buildings, the Conservation Area contains a large number of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to its character and have townscape merit. These are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map as 'positive buildings' and in many cases they are also



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Gravel Hill House
- Walk House
- No. 123 Rookery Road

proposed for inclusion on the Local List. This follows advice provided in English Heritage's Guidance on conservation area character appraisals, and in paragraph HE10.1 of PPS5, both of which stress the importance of identifying and protecting such buildings.

6.4.2 The criteria used for selection of positive buildings are those set out in Appendix 1 of English Heritage's Guidance on conservation area appraisals (2006). Where a building has been adversely affected by modern changes and restoration is either impractical or indeed, not possible, they are excluded.

6.4.3 Of special note are:

***Shopping parades:***

- High Street.

***Individual buildings:***

- Arbourtree House;
- Gravel Hill House;
- Walk House;
- Netley House;
- Maypole House;
- No. 18 School Road;
- The Vine Public House;
- Wombourne Village Hall.

## 6.5 Negative buildings

6.5.1 The Conservation Area also contains a number of unlisted buildings that make no positive contribution to its character. Some of these are identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map as 'negative buildings or sites'. This is in accordance with guidance within PPS5, which stresses the importance of dealing with such buildings through the planning process. Paragraph HE9.5 in the latter notes that:

Not all elements of a ... Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance.... Where an element does not positively contribute to its significance, local planning authorities should take into account the desirability of enhancing or better revealing the significance of the ... Conservation Area

6.5.2 The criteria used for the selection of negative buildings or sites are derived from those set out in Appendix 1 of English Heritage's Guidance



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Nos. 10 - 34 Windmill Bank
- Wombourne Library and Community Centre
- The Wombourne Club

on conservation area appraisals (February 2006). This sets out a series of 10 questions regarding the characteristics of unlisted buildings in a conservation area. Whereas a positive answer to any one of these can provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area, by deduction, a building or site which fails to score any positive answers to the same questions can be regarded as detracting from the overall character and integrity of a conservation area and therefore to be having a negative impact upon it.

6.5.3 The negative buildings and sites identified in Wombourne are:

- Church Road: Youth and community centre and car park, Christadelphian Hall and car park, Wombourne Cricket Club clubhouse and car park;
- Mill Lane: Chapel and clubhouses;
- Gravel Hill: Civic Centre;
- Maypole Street: Maypole Mews;
- Planks Lane: Caravan Park;
- Windmill Bank: Nos. 10 to 34 and forecourts.

## 6.6 Building materials & local details

6.6.1 A few remaining early buildings, dating from the 17th century, are timber-framed with brick infill panels, however, most buildings are constructed entirely of brick. The exception to this is the sandstone built church. Initially roofs were of handmade clay tiles until the mid-19th century when slate began to be brought in from Wales. There are no completely stone buildings apart from the church, as clearly the local sandstone was too soft for building purposes apart from poorer quality buildings such as barns and storehouses. However, some sandstone is used for walling, notably around Gravel Hill House and the church.

6.6.2 Boundaries are very mixed although many houses in the commercial core are so close to the road that none have ever existed. Elsewhere there are some detailed iron railings such as on Netley House, similar to others found in villages across South Staffordshire. Most other boundaries are of red brick and the use of concrete render on some walls has caused the soft bricks to crumble leaving unsightly scars in places.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Cricket Club
- Sandstone wall around Gravel Hill House
- Red brick was used extensively in the construction of Millbrook

6.6.3 After the 18th century brown brick was more common, with little decoration apart from an occasional dentil eaves cornice. Windows were casement or sashes. During the early 19th century, slightly better quality details became common, with sash windows, curved or flat stone or brick window heads, and panelled doors. Most examples have already been lost during updating of properties, either through replacement or rendering or painting over of details. Some good quality 19th century details can still be found such as on the front door of the Old Vicarage, a window to the rear of Maypole House and the old school masters house, No. 25 School Road, which lies just outside the Conservation Area boundary. Other details include the fine iron balconies on the side elevation of Millbrook.

6.6.4 It is mainly the dominant red brick and white-painted render or stucco that provides colour in the built-up areas. Roofs are usually mid- to dark brown flat clay tile, or grey Welsh slate. Windows, doors and shop fronts are painted a variety of colours, usually not particularly obtrusive, except in cases where large modern signage has been introduced.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Window to the rear of Maypole House
- Dentil eaves and datestone cornice in Gravel Hill

## 7. Character areas

There are three 'Character Areas' in the Wombourne Conservation Area, based on buildings, uses and landscape. These are:

- Wombourne Village Centre
- Wom Brook
- School Road.

### 7.1 Area 1: Wombourne Village Centre

#### **Key positives:**

- Winding, narrow roads circle and interconnect with each other around the large green open space of the cricket ground;
- Varied roof lines and eaves heights provide visual interest in views along the street;
- Small stock of historic buildings, some on the statutory list;
- Some historic buildings with exposed timber-framing add to the interest of the buildings;
- Useful shops providing a number of general and specialist services serve this local and wider community;
- Other useful amenities including library and community centre, as well as facilities such as public toilets;
- A strong sense of a community spirit is shown with the tall colourful maypole installed in the village centre on Windmill Bank;
- Characteristic boundary treatments with ornate cast iron railings;
- Views up to St Benedict's Church and down towards the Wom Brook and further to the wooded hillside beyond;
- Some infill development has worked well due to its scale, positioning, materials and design:
  - Walkers' Way.

#### **Key negatives:**

- Fast and consistent motor traffic through the centre of the village;
- Modern shop signage and shop fronts throughout High Street, Maypole Street and Windmill Bank. Signage is often oversized and not in traditional shades of colour;
- Many traditional shop fronts have been lost;
- Lack of continuity/quality in the public realm: street lights, paving;
- Wheelie bins, both domestic and commercial, dominate the streetscape, particularly on collection day;

#### **Images from Top to Bottom**

- Exposed timber framing in High Street
- Maypole in Windmill Bank
- Shop signage in Maypole Street



- Some inserted features such as porches;
- Introduction of modern materials, such as uPVC;
- Many open areas have been infilled and there is little scope for new development without further harming the character of the Conservation Area;
- Late 20th century developments in and behind High Street, Windmill Bank and Maypole Street are overlarge and have resulted in wide expanses of modern materials such as tarmac that do not enhance the character of an historic, rural market village:
  - Arbourtrees Court;
  - Manor Gardens;
  - Clubhouses behind High Street and at the cricket club;
  - Shopping parades, west side of Windmill Bank;
  - Maypole Court;
  - Telephone Exchange.

## 7.2 Area 2: Wom Brook

### **Key positives:**

- An area of meadows that surrounds the brook and leads up to and includes Walk House a much altered 19th century detached house;
- Trees, bushes and grassed areas provide a green buffer to the village;
- The few structures that lie near by include listed buildings;
- A relatively sedate feeling to the area granted by fewer vehicles passing in this direction out of the village.

### **Key negatives:**

- Use of modern materials and details on Walk House;
- Late 20th century developments: some houses on Rookery Road peer over the brook and their suburban appearance encroaches on its rural character;
- The loss of historic mill buildings means that this strip of land has relatively little that can be controlled through conservation area legislation, despite it providing an important backdrop to the historic core of the village.

## 7.3 Area 3: School Road

### **Key positives:**

- One or two historic buildings;
- Views north across the school to trees beyond;

### **Images from Top to Bottom**

- UPVC windows in Gravel Hill
- Telephone Exchange
- Meadows next to Walk House
- Footbridge over Wom Brook



- The hedges and walls of the churchyard provide a traditional gap in the streetscape;
- Other small areas of sandstone walling;
- Mature trees at key locations;
- Certain infill development has worked well due to sympathetic scale, materials and design:
  - Old Vicarage Close.

**Key negatives:**

- Broad, modern highway has lost its original sense of enclosure with new buildings set further back from the road and the historic building line;
- Non-traditional paving, including some tarmaced pavements;
- Wheelie bins;
- Steel street lighting columns;
- Telegraph poles and overhead wires in places;
- Garish signage of the petrol station on the north side of the road and modern signage on shops on the corner of Station Road;
- Use of modern materials and details on many of the unlisted positive buildings, such as uPVC windows;
- Poor quality and poor design of some buildings:
  - Nos. 12 to 16 and Nos. 20 to 24 School Road.



**Images from Top to Bottom**

- The Old Vicarage
- Wrought iron railings in Old Vicarage Close
- Petrol station in School Road

## 8. Issues

### 8.1 Key issues

8.1.1 From the identification of 'Key Negatives' in the preceding chapter, the following are considered to be the principal issues in the Wombourne Conservation Area:

- Maintenance of the urban character;
- Maintenance of the rural character;
- Traffic issues – busy and hard to cross roads;
- Control of boundaries (gates, fencing, walls) and building details;
- Pressure for housing development;
- Poor quality public realm;
- Historic buildings in need of repair or improvement;
- Use of modern materials and details on historic buildings;
- Control of new shop fronts and signage;
- Need for full Local List assessment;
- Need for a revision of the Conservation Area boundary;
- Lack of amenity space due to the restricted access to the green;
- Future use/ redevelopment of the caravan park land;
- Many shop fronts and the exteriors of residential buildings would benefit from updating to revitalise the somewhat tired appearance of the village;
- The need for buffer zones.

### 8.2 Conservation Area boundary review

8.2.1 A number of boundary revisions would improve the extent to which the designation accurately reflects the special character of Wombourne:

#### **Additions:**

- Planks Lane: Nos. 1-7;
- Rookery Lane: Nos. 115, 117, 119 (Wombrook Cottage), 121 (Paupers Cottage), 123 and Meadow View;
- High Street: The Vine Public House, Wombourne Village Hall.

#### **Deletions:**

- Mill Lane: Clinic, Mill Lane Farmhouse, Kellica, No.1, Girl Guide Hall, Club, Club.

8.3.1 Also, the identification of a number of 'Buffer Zones' would recognise the impact that development in these areas could have on the neighbouring designated conservation area:

#### **Buffer Zones:**

- Water meadows around Wom Brook south and east of Walk House;
- Area to the east and north-east of the conservation area;
- East side of Walk Lane and parkland around Walk House;
- Land to the south of High Street;
- Land and meadows to the east of The Vine Public House and Wombourne Village Hall;
- School Road north of Windmill Bank.

## Appendix 2: Local Plan policies

<b>BE7</b>	Conservation Areas – Planning Applications
<b>BE9</b>	Conservation Areas – Demolition Prior to Redevelopment
<b>BE12</b>	Conservation Areas – Removal of Intrusive Features
<b>BE14</b>	Retention of Shop Fronts
<b>BE15</b>	Replacement of Shop Fronts
<b>BE16</b>	Security Screens
<b>BE17</b>	Internally Illuminated Signs
<b>BE18</b>	New Advertisements
<b>BE19</b>	Existing Signs
<b>BE20</b>	Reuse and Adaptation of Rural Buildings
<b>BE26</b>	New Development – Design Criteria
<b>BE28</b>	Protection of Ground Water Resources
<b>C1</b>	Reuse of Rural Buildings
<b>C2</b>	Use of Agricultural Land
<b>C3</b>	Development on Agricultural Land
<b>C4</b>	Dwellings in the Countryside
<b>C8</b>	Extensions
<b>C13</b>	Expansion of Businesses
<b>GB1</b>	Green Belt (General)
<b>H12</b>	Local Needs Assessment Criteria
<b>OC1</b>	Open Countryside – General



## Appendix 3: Bibliography

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## Appendix 4: Contacts

South Staffordshire Council  
Council Offices  
Wolverhampton Road  
Codsall  
Staffordshire  
WV8 1PX

01902 696000  
[www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk)

Conservation Team:  
[conservation@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:conservation@sstaffs.gov.uk)  
01902 696425

Staffordshire Historic Environment Record  
Development Services Directorate  
Riverway  
Stafford  
Staffordshire  
ST16 3TJ

01785 277281  
[her@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:her@staffordshire.gov.uk)

English Heritage  
1 Waterhouse Square  
138 - 142 Holborn  
London  
EC1N 2ST

020 7973 3000  
[customers@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:customers@english-heritage.org.uk)

English Heritage (West Midlands)  
The Axis  
10 Holliday Street  
Birmingham B1 1TG

0121 625 6820  
[westmidlands@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:westmidlands@english-heritage.org.uk)

## Notes



# Notes



## Notes





**Wombourne Conservation Area Management Plan  
Adopted 11 November 2010**



**South Staffordshire Council**