

# BLACKFORDBY CONSERVATION AREA

## APPRAISAL AND STUDY



APRIL 2001

## **PREFACE**

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that Conservation Areas are kept under review (Section 69(2)) and that local planning authorities in exercising their planning powers, pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas (Section 72). Having regard to these requirements and the advice contained in the English Heritage guidance notes 'Conservation Area Practice' and 'Conservation Area Appraisals', the District Council produced a draft Appraisal/Study of the Blackfordby Conservation Area in December 2000. The draft document included proposed alterations to the boundaries of the designated Conservation Area (of September 1992).

The draft document was the subject of consultation and publicity over a six week period between 4 December 2000 and 15 January 2001. Having considered the various representations and recommended amendments the District Council's Executive Board of 3 April 2001 resolved that subject to the amendments outlined in the Executive Board report the Conservation Area Appraisal/Study document be adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the policies of the North West Leicestershire Local Plan.

As supplementary planning guidance the Conservation Area Appraisal/Study document whilst not having the same status as an adopted plan policy may be taken into account as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Conservation Areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Section 69(1)(a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). The Blackfordby Conservation Area was designated by the District Council in September 1992 and the existing boundaries are shown on Map 1.
- 1.2 This Appraisal/Study document aims to fulfil two key roles. The Appraisal outlines the historical development of the settlement and defines the special interest, character and appearance of the built and natural environment within and surrounding the existing Conservation Area boundaries. The Study identifies future opportunities for the preservation and enhancement of the Area. (The numbers **in bold** in the text refer to an associated plate/photograph).

## **2. LOCATION, POPULATION AND TOPOGRAPHY OF BLACKFORDBY**

2.1 Blackfordby is located some 3 km to the north-west of Ashby de la Zouch town centre and 1.5 km to the south-east of Woodville. The village, which has a population of some 1,300 people\*, was historically situated within its own parish. Blackfordby is now within the parish of Ashby de la Zouch.

2.2 The settlement is situated on the southern slope of a hill, which continues northwards to its peak at Burton Road (A50). The village is largely surrounded by an undulating agricultural landscape, in both arable and pastoral use.

\* Mid-1998 Estimate - Source : Leicestershire County Council

### 3. ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BLACKFORDBY

- 3.1 Blackfordby had been established by the ninth century and largely developed with an agricultural based economy until the second half of the twentieth century.
- 3.2 In the medieval period the La Zouch family of Ashby Castle owned lands at Blackfordby and the Abbott of Lilleshall (Staffordshire) held land around the settlement (Nichols, 1804, p933). After the dissolution of the monasteries in the late 1530s lands at Blackfordby - as part of the manor of Ashby de la Zouch - were given by the Crown to the Hastings family (the Earls of Huntingdon) of Ashby Castle (Nichols, 1804, p924). Following the death of the tenth Earl of Huntingdon in 1789, the Manor passed by settlement to Francis Rawdon-Hastings; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Moira <sup>(1)</sup> (Nichols, 1804, p305).
- 3.3 The Joyce family of Blackfordby Hall were also important landowners around the village from (at least) the eighteenth century (Nichols, 1804, p633). The William and Mary period Hall occupied an eminence to the north-east of the Parish Church (Hillier, 1994, p108). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Blackfordby Hall estate was described 'as well-wooded and containing excellent land for both tillage, sheep and dairy' (Nichols, 1804, p633).
- 3.4 The nineteenth century witnessed the development of formal education facilities in the village. In 1843 the National School opened on Main Street **(1)** (opposite its junction with Well Lane) and in 1889, the primary school with its attached schoolmasters house was built next to the Parish Church of St. Margaret of Antioch **(2)**.



**Plate 1: Former National School, Main Street (of 1843)**



**Plate 2 : St. Margaret's Primary School and (Old) Schoolmasters House, Main Street (of 1889)**

- 3.5 The Parish Church **(3)** itself had been newly built in 1859 and had replaced a thirteenth century chapel in the Early English architectural style. The Vicarage was built in 1878 on land given by the Earl of Loudoun (Kellys, 1904, p40). The graveyard was also extended at this period (White, 1877, p165). Other nineteenth century developments included the rebuilding of the Old House **(4)**.
- 3.6 From the mid-nineteenth century the brick, sanitary pipe and pottery industries concentrated on the fireclay seams around Swadlincote, Church Gresley and Woodville increasingly became a source of local employment.<sup>(2)</sup> These industries extended into the parish of Blackfordby at The Shrubbery and the Albion Fire Clay Works (White, 1877, p165). In the second half of the twentieth century, the fireclay industries went into decline.
- 3.7 The post Second World War period also witnessed significant levels of new housing development in Blackfordby, particularly in its southern part and the village has increasingly become a dormitory settlement. Within the historic core a number of building demolitions have occurred; the most significant being Blackfordby Hall in 1966 (replaced by another substantial dwelling in the 1990s).

### **Notes**

1. Francis Rawdon-Hastings (1754-1826) was the nephew of the tenth Earl of Huntingdon. Formerly Lord Rawdon, he became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Moira in 1793 upon the death of his father, Viscount Loudoun in 1804 following his marriage to the Countess of Loudoun (Lady Flora Muir Campbell) and finally in 1816 the 1st Marquis of Hastings (White, 1846, p297).
2. The Public Health Acts of 1848, 1866 and 1875 gave a significant boost to the sanitary pottery industries (Palmer and Neaverson, 1992, p114)



**Plate 3 : Parish Church of St. Margaret of Antioch, Main Street (of 1859)**



**Plate 4 : The Old House, No. 2 Main Street**

#### **4. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING POSITIVELY TOWARDS THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

##### **Character Statement**

- 4.1 The Conservation Area is concentrated around the Parish Church in the northern part of the village and has a relatively open character. The individual elements considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area are shown on Map 2.

##### **Building Materials and Local Details**

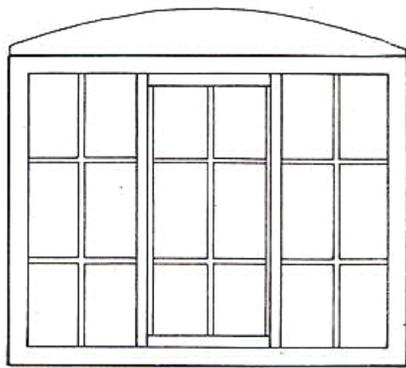
- 4.2 The Area contains buildings of various materials, denoting the different phases of development represented. The earliest cottage at No. 15 Main Street; of sixteenth century origin; is of timber box framed construction **(5)**. The Victorian Parish Church is of rusticated stonework, although most nineteenth century buildings are of local red brickwork **(6)**. Thatched roofs remain to Oak Cottage and No. 15 Main Street, although properties typically have dark clay plain tiles.
- 4.3 The predominant original window type to pre-nineteenth century buildings was the Yorkshire horizontal sliding sash (Figure 1). In the Victorian period, vertical sliding sashes were typically installed (Figure 2). The finish to timber window units is largely of a white paint. The timber doors to many older properties are of a simple vertically boarded ledged and braced design (Figure 3). Buildings of some architectural pretension typically have a paneled design (Figure 4).



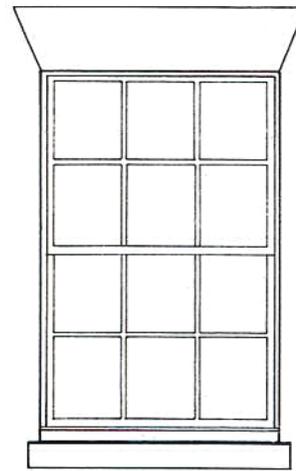
**Plate 5 : No. 15 Main Street**



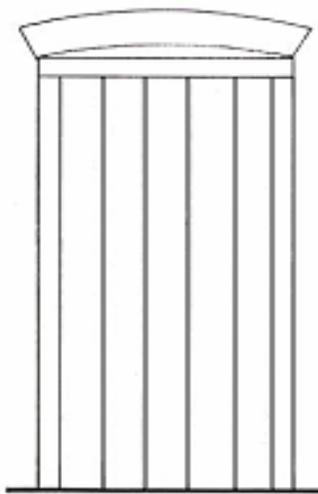
**Plate 6 : Nos. 6, 8 and 10 Main Street**



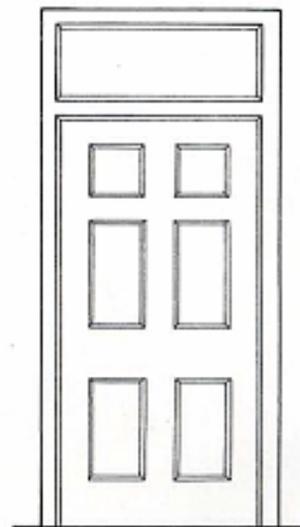
**Figure 1 : Yorkshire Horizontal Sliding Sash Window Unit**



**Figure 2 : Vertical Sliding Sash Window Unit**



**Figure 3 : Ledged and Braced Vertically Boarded Door**



**Figure 4 : Panelled Door**

## Architectural and Historic Quality of Listed and Unlisted Buildings

- 4.4 There are eight buildings within the Area which are included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest; all listed at Grade II as being buildings of special interest (Appendix A).
- 4.5 The listed buildings are of sixteenth to nineteenth century in origin. The earliest structures are the thatched cottages - No. 15 Main Street and Oak Cottage (formerly Well Cottage). The Old House at No. 2 Main Street although superficially of an early nineteenth century appearance may have earlier origins. The listed buildings also include the Parish Church, the Primary School with its attached (old) schoolhouse and the Black Lion Public House **(7)**; all buildings of the nineteenth century. The Parish Church of St. Margaret of Antioch was built in 1859 to the designs of the Derby architect Henry Isaac Stevens (1806 -1873). The clock was added to the Church in 1920 in memory of the men of the village who died in battle during the First World War of 1914-1918 (Kelly's, 1925, p46).
- 4.6 There are also a number of unlisted buildings which are considered to make a positive contribution to the streetscape of the Conservation Area (Appendix B). Most of these buildings appear to be of a late eighteenth or nineteenth century date and include the former national school of 1843 and the (old) Vicarage of 1878. The twentieth century is represented by the Blackfordby Methodist Church of the 1930s on Main Street **(8)**. The Church replaced a building of 1823, subsequently converted to a dwelling in the 1930s with the opening of the new church building, but later demolished in the 1960s (Hillier, 1994, p109).



**Plate 7 : Black Lion Public House, Main Street**



**Plate 8 : Blackfordby Methodist Church, Main Street**

## **Boundary Treatments**

- 4.7 Within the Area, two sections of boundary treatments are included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest on their own merit. On the eastern boundary to The Old House (2 Main Street) is a nineteenth century coped stone wall; some 2.2 metres in height; which terminates in the eastern wall of a brick outbuilding **(9)**. On the western boundary to the former Blackfordby Hall, there is an eighteenth century coursed rubble boundary wall; varying between 1.8 and 3.0 metres in height; situated on the top of the roadside bank to Main Street **(10)**. These listed walls are important features at the northern entrance into the Conservation Area.

## **The Archaeological Significance and Potential of the Area**

- 4.8 Sites of potential below ground archaeological interest exist within the Area. These include the areas around the Parish Church of St. Margaret's of Antioch and the new Blackfordby Hall, both of which replaced earlier structures on their sites. Other sites, now open, but formerly occupied by buildings include areas of land to the north-east of the Parish Church and to the north of the Blue Bell Inn. These are also likely to contain archaeological evidence of the former structures.
- 4.9 With regard to standing building archaeology, although superficially of an early nineteenth century appearance The Old House (2 Main Street) may contain an earlier core.



**Plate 9 : Boundary Wall, The Old House, Main Street**



**Plate 10 : Boundary Wall to Former Blackfordby Hall, Main Street**

## **The Contribution of Green Spaces and Natural Elements**

- 4.10 The recreation ground ('Raddle Bank') at the junction of Main Street/Well Lane makes a significant contribution to the character of the Area **(11)**. Many properties have substantial plots which adds to the relatively open nature.
- 4.11 There is one mature tree group covered by a Tree Preservation Order in the Area; that surrounding the site of the former Blackfordby Hall. In particular, the copse of mature deciduous and evergreen trees to the north of the Hall site provides an attractive visual backdrop to the modern property which now occupies the eminence. The copse to the north of the Old House is prominent at the northern entrance into the Area.
- 4.12 On the land to the southern side of the former National School is a medieval freshwater spring, which was restored in 1996 **(12)**.

## **The Character and Relationship of Spaces Within the Area**

- 4.13 The whitewash paint facades to the Blue Bell Public House ensure that the building is prominent at the southern entrance into the Area **(13)**. On the ascent of Main Street the Parish Church; with its broach spire; and the primary school are landmarks above Raddle Bank **(14)**. At the northern edge of the Area, the new Blackfordby Hall is prominent in its position on raised land above Main Street **(15)**. The sunken nature of Main Street at the northern entrance into the Area provides a strong sense of enclosure and channels views southwards along the curvature of the road **(16)**.



**Plate 11 : 'Raddle Bank' Recreation Ground, Main Street/Well Lane**



**Plate 12 : Blackfordby Spring, adjacent to Former National School, Main Street**



**Plate 13 : Blue Bell Public House, Main Street, at Southern Entrance to Conservation Area**



**Plate 14 : View over 'Raddle Bank' Recreation Ground towards Parish Church and Village Primary School**



**Plate 15 : 'New' Blackfordby Hall, Main Street, viewed from junction of Main Street/Ashby Lane**



**Plate 16 : View Southwards along Main Street at Northern Entrance to Conservation Area**

## 5. THE EXISTENCE OF NEUTRAL AREAS

5.1 The post war infill residential development along the principal streets is considered to have had a largely neutral impact on the character of the Area. Whilst many properties present a plain suburban appearance with little or no reference to the local vernacular architecture, the largely two storey form of construction respects the scale of surrounding well established properties (17). The larger scale of the new property on the site of the former Blackfordby Hall reflects the historical importance of the site.



**Plate 17 : Post War Infill Development : Nos. 9a/9b/9c Main Street**

## 6. FACTORS HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

### Permitted Development Rights

- 6.1 A significant detrimental impact on the character of the Area has occurred as result of the alterations undertaken to some residential properties under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 and its predecessors.
- 6.2 Although permitted development rights are generally more restricted in Conservation Areas than other parts of the District, this has not prevented the loss and alteration of features to older residential properties which are not listed. The permitted works have included the removal of traditional timber window and door units and their replacement with modern units of aluminium and pvcU construction **(18)**. Some replacement window units, whether of pvcU, aluminium or even of timber, have also resulted in the introduction of window types such as mock Georgian bow windows **(19)**, which do not reflect traditional fenestration details of properties within the Area.
- 6.3 Other works detrimental to the character of the Area include the capping of chimney stacks, the replacement of black cast iron rainwater goods with grey pvcU products and the removal of clay plain tile or Welsh slate roof coverings and their replacement with concrete tiles. There has also been an application of modern cement based render to the facades of some buildings.



**Plate 18 : Upvc Window Units to Front Elevation of No. 8 Main Street**



**Plate 19 : Mock 'Georgian' Bay Windows to Front Elevation of No. 11 Main Street**

## **7. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT**

### **Planning Policies**

- 7.1 It is likely that there will be future pressures for infill housing development in the Conservation Area as for the most part the Area is included within the Limits to Development for Blackfordby as delineated in the Local Plan. Such infill development could undermine the existing open character of the Area and this will be an important consideration amongst the criteria against which any development will be assessed as outlined in the relevant policies of the Local Plan (Policies E10 and E11). In this regard it should also be emphasised that the omission of any particular feature or space in the Conservation Area Appraisal should not be taken to mean that it is of no interest.
- 7.2 Proposals affecting listed buildings will be considered having regard to policies E13, E14, E15 and E16 of the Local Plan and due regard will be had to Policy E19 in respect of sites of archaeological interest. The Local Plan policies as they relate to the historic environment are outlined in Appendix C.

### **The Removal of Permitted Development Rights?**

- 7.3 The effect of alterations to older unlisted residential properties as a result of permitted development rights have been detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area. As a mechanism to increase local planning authority controls on such works, an Article 4(2) Direction under the provisions of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 allows authorities to

withdraw certain categories of permitted development rights in respect of alterations and extensions to residential properties in Conservation Areas without referral to the Secretary of State. The District Council has generally resolved not to serve such Directions, but rather to provide advice and education on the use of appropriate materials and detailing to properties in such Areas. This is the position the Council intends to maintain with regard to Blackfordby and in this respect has produced a guidance note for residents of properties within the Conservation Area. A leaflet is also available from the Planning and Environment Division giving advise on the pointing of stonework and brickwork.

#### **Environmental Enhancements and Repairs to Historic Building Fabric**

- 7.4 Where resources become available the Local Authority will endeavour to undertake works on public land to enhance the character of the Area. Such works could include the repair or replacement of street furniture. The Council will also endeavour where practicable to work with other bodies such as statutory undertakers in relation to encouraging the sensitive siting of services, road signage etc.
- 7.5 With regard to the repair of existing historic built fabric, the District Council operates a discretionary historic buildings grant scheme which makes available grant aid for private individuals in relation to the repair of listed buildings and buildings which are considered to contribute positively to the character of a Conservation Area. Details of the scheme (which has a limited budget) are available from the Planning and Environment Division. A similar scheme is

operated by the Heritage and Resources Team in the Environmental Management Department at Leicestershire County Council.

- 7.6 Where any historic buildings become subject to long term vacancy or neglect, the District Council will attempt to work with owners/prospective purchasers to secure the long term future of any building. The District Council does, however, have more formal powers in the form of Urgent Works Notices and Repairs Notices to require that repairs be undertaken to listed buildings and other buildings of architectural or historic merit in Conservation Areas.

## **8. APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A : BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST IN THE AREA**

**Grade II**

Boundary Wall (to south of) former Blackfordby Hall, Main Street (18<sup>th</sup> Century)

The Black Lion Public House, Main Street (late 19<sup>th</sup> Century)

15 Main Street (c.1600)

The Old House, 2 Main Street (early 19<sup>th</sup> Century)

Boundary Wall at the Old House, 2 Main Street (19<sup>th</sup> Century)

Parish Church of St Margaret of Antioch, Main Street (1859)

St Margaret's Church of England Primary School and (Old) Schoolhouse,

Main Street (late 19<sup>th</sup> Century - 1889)

Oak Cottage (formerly Well Cottage), Well Lane (18<sup>th</sup> Century)

**Source : DoE, 1977, pp16-18 & 51**

**NB The above list does NOT include all those buildings in the parish which are included in the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. The list is correct as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001.**

**APPENDIX B : UNLISTED BUILDINGS OF ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC MERIT WHICH ARE CONSIDERED TO MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE STREETScape OF THE AREA**

5 Main Street

7 Main Street

9 Main Street (Blacksmiths Cottage)

Former National School, Main Street

Blackfordby (Wesleyan) Methodist Church, Main Street

Blue Bell Inn, Main Street

**Outbuilding to Old House, 2 Main Street**

The (Old) Vicarage, 4 Main Street

6 Main Street

8 Main Street

12 Main Street (Spring Cottage)

The Fields, Well Lane

The buildings outlined **in bold** are considered to have listed status by reason of being situated within the curtilage of a principal listed building

**List prepared in the line with the criteria set out in the Appendix to the English Heritage advise note 'Conservation Area Appraisals' (English Heritage, 1997)**

## **UNLISTED BUILDINGS : ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

In assessing whether or not unlisted buildings make a positive contribution to the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area, the following questions should be asked:

- Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?
- Has its qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of the buildings in the conservation area?
- Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?
- Does it, individually or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or of an earlier phase of growth?
- Does it have a significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park, or landscape feature?
- Does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area?
- Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?
- If a public building, does its function or enclosed public space contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area?
- If a structure associated with a designed landscape within the conservation area, such as walls, terracing or a minor garden buildings, is it of identifiable importance to the historic design?

In English Heritage's view, any one of these characteristics could provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area, provided that its historic form and qualities have not been seriously eroded by unsympathetic alteration.

**Source: English Heritage, 1997, p11.**

## **APPENDIX C : THE POLICIES OF THE NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL PLAN IN RESPECT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

### **POLICY E10**

Development will not be permitted within Conservation Areas, or where it would affect the setting of such areas, which would:

- (a) Be detrimental to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area in terms of:
  - (i) scale, proportions and massing;
  - (ii) layout, grouping and setting;
  - (iii) detailing and materials of construction.
- (b) Be detrimental to the setting of buildings which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- (c) Result in the loss of open spaces or important views within, into and out of the Conservation Area.
- (d) Result in the loss of particular features which contribute positively to character and appearance of the Conservation Area, including:-
  - (i) Walls and other means of enclosure;
  - (ii) Ground surfaces;
  - (iii) Natural features (such as trees and hedgerows); and
  - (iv) Features of archaeological interest.
- (e) Be detrimental to environmental quality in terms of:-
  - (i) Traffic generation;
  - (ii) Noise and other forms of environmental intrusion.

### **POLICY E11**

Consent for the demolition of buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be granted unless:-

- (a) It can be demonstrated that the condition of the building makes it impracticable to repair, renovate or adapt to any reasonably beneficial use for which planning permission would be given; and
- (b) There is clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use of the building, or to find a viable and acceptable new use or uses.

In the case of buildings which make little or no contribution to the character and appearance of their conservation area, demolition will not be permitted unless redevelopment of the site or the creation of an open space would make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area concerned.

## **POLICY E12**

Replacement or alteration of existing shop fronts within Conservation Areas, or where they would affect the setting of such areas, will only be permitted where:-

- (a) The existing shop front is of insufficient quality to warrant its retention; and
- (b) The replacement or alteration is of a design which is appropriate to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

## **POLICY E13**

Consent for the demolition of a listed building will not be granted unless:-

- (a) It can be demonstrated that the condition of the building makes it impracticable to repair, renovate or adapt to any reasonably beneficial use for which planning permission would be granted; and
- (b) There is clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use of the building, or to find a viable and acceptable new use or uses.

## **POLICY E14**

Change of use of a Listed Building will only be permitted where no detrimental effect is likely to arise from the proposed use on the character or appearance of the building or its setting.

## **POLICY E15**

Alterations or extensions to Listed Buildings will not be permitted which are detrimental to the special architectural or historic interest of the building or to its character or setting.

## **POLICY E16**

Development will not be permitted which would adversely affect the setting of a Listed Building, in terms of scale, massing, form, siting, design or materials of construction.

## **POLICY E17**

Where a historic byway makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the surrounding landscape, development which would significantly diminish that contribution, or otherwise detrimentally affect the setting or amenity value of such byway will not be permitted.

### **POLICY E18**

Development will not be permitted which would adversely affect the character or appearance or setting of historic gardens included in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, and identified on the Proposals Map.

### **POLICY E19**

Development will not be permitted which would affect a scheduled ancient monument or other nationally important archaeological site, as shown on the Proposals Map, or subsequently recognised, or its setting or amenity value. Where known sites of county or local significance are affected, planning permission may be granted in terms which would allow preservation in situ, or, where this is impractical, by investigation and recording.

In areas of archaeological potential, planning permission will not be granted without proper evaluation of the archaeological implications of the proposed development.

### **POLICY E43**

Outdoor advertisement consent will be granted where the proposed advertisement respects the interests of amenity and public safety.

In assessing the likely effect of proposed advertisements on such interests, regard will be had to all material factors, and in particular :-

- (a) In the case of amenity, to the general characteristics of the locality, including (where relevant) the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural or similar interest; and
- (b) In the case of public safety, to the effect of the proposal on all aspects of pedestrian or vehicular safety.

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