



Little Comberton Village Design Statement

Prepared by Little Comberton Parish Council 2015-16

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Purpose

The Village Design Statement (VDS) captures the distinctive character of Little Comberton through the eyes of its inhabitants and sets out the features and qualities that are valued by them. Whilst it does not consider whether development is desirable, it is intended to act as guidance for residents, architects, builders and Wychavon District Council (WDC) in considering planning applications. Once adopted by WDC as a Local Information Source, because a VDS represents the views of the whole village, it carries a limited degree of weight in planning matters.

Process

In order to draw up a VDS Little Comberton Parish Council decided to build on the information and views captured in 2005 as part of the detailed consultation with residents during the preparation of the 2006 Little Comberton Parish Plan.

Three questions designed to capture residents' thoughts about the distinctive characteristics of Little Comberton were put to villagers at a well-attended drop-in session and via a questionnaire distributed to all households in January 2015. Thirty six households responded, representing 27% of residents. Once these had been collated a draft VDS was circulated to every household in the village for comment. Final revisions were then made prior to submission of the document to Wychavon District Council.

The Village

Little Comberton is a small village of approximately 300 residents. Situated in an agricultural landscape 2 miles southeast of Pershore in Worcestershire, the village is an architectural and historical gem which has nestled at the foot of the northern escarpment of Bredon Hill for over two millennia. The parish covers 790 acres (320 hectares) of pasture and arable farmland, which include the slopes of Bredon Hill, which are part of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



The Memorial Garden

The main feature of the village is St Peter's Church which, along with the village hall, is the focal point of many community and parish events. These are the only two 'community' buildings in the village, nevertheless there is a strong and vibrant community spirit with an active Parish Council and Sports and Social Committee, together with strong links with surrounding villages. Situated at the geographical heart of the village, the well-tended memorial ground is the only public access space.

Historical Development

This area was inhabited from prehistoric times and Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age and Roman artefacts have been found within the parish boundary. The origins of the village are likely to be between the 7th and 9th century AD, when scattered farmsteads were coalescing into compact settlements surrounded by open fields laid out in strips and farmed communally under a feudal lord. The church of St Peter, parts of which date from the 11th Century, is said to be built on the site of a Roman temple.

Three substantial Tudor half-timbered houses grace the village; two of them are believed to have been owned by Henry VIII's widow, Catherine Parr (1512- 1548). Two ancient dovecotes lie within a quarter of a mile of the church. The village hall was formerly a school at the western end of the churchyard and was subsequently moved, stone by stone, to its present site.



The first clear map of the village, so far discovered, was surveyed for the Little Comberton Inclosure Act of 1806, when agricultural land was parcelled up and allocated to those who had held strips in the open fields. In several areas where arable land was put to grass, the form of the mediaeval strips is still clearly preserved as ridge and furrow.

With the establishment of tenants' rights in 1872 orchards proliferated, as shown on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps, and a few still survive today to the east of Wick Road as part of Natural England's priority Habitat Inventory of Traditional Orchards. There have been allotments in the village since 1843, with various owners working plots rented from the Rector. Most of these disappeared when Orchard Drive was built, leaving the remaining allotment land in private ownership.

Until the 20th century development was centred round several farmhouses (Nash's Farm, The Grange, The Old Manor and the Rectory), with their associated barns, farmyards and tenant cottages. The Inclosure map shows some 30 domestic buildings and this number changed very little until the 1930's, when seven Council Houses were built in Wick Road. Since then some of the old cottages have been demolished and piecemeal infill and replacement houses in varying styles and materials have been constructed.

An estate of bungalows and another of houses were built in the 1960s and 1970s, and a number of the old brick barns were converted to dwellings. The population records and the census returns of the 19th and 20th centuries show that the population of the village fluctuated between 216 and 299 with a dip to 167 in 1931. It currently stands at 297 residents (2011 Census). In 2011 26% of homes were rented, 11% privately and 15% from social landlords, with the remaining 74% privately owned.

Setting

The setting of Little Comberton is notable for its relationship with Bredon Hill and the agricultural land which surrounds it, as well as for the way in which, throughout the village, small fields are interspersed with domestic and agricultural buildings.

The 1806 Inclosure landscape of the parish, including some mediaeval boundaries, is basically intact although some hedges and walls have been lost, especially to the north and east of the village, as many small fields were incorporated into large ones in the 1960s on Grange Farm land.



Little Comberton from Endon Hill

There are only three places with houses outside the main settlement: at the western approach to the village with Porter's Cottages and Ringsmere Orchard, Hickley Piece on the eastern approach, and Old Fallow Farm to the north. The landscape setting of the village is enhanced by a number of large specimen trees, including several Wellingtonias.

Architecture

The oldest surviving houses in the village are timber-framed, some as early as the 15th century but mostly 17th century. Although only about 35 out of 134 houses in the village predate the 20th century, visually the older houses tend to be more prominent, and this, combined with the irregular road pattern, and the wide range of vernacular materials used, gives the overall impression of an old settlement.



Old Manor Cottage

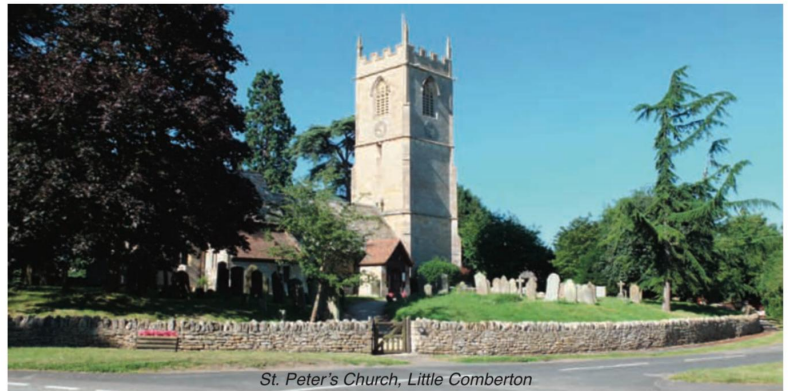
The majority of other houses are built of red brick, with some rendered, although all but one of the bungalows in Orchard Drive are built from yellow reconstituted Cotswold stone. A limited amount of old Cotswold stone exists in the village, in the church, plinths and chimneys of timber frame and brick dwellings and a number of old garden walls centred around the crossroads and Manor Lane.

Ten buildings are wholly or partially thatched. Some of the other older houses may have been thatched but are now roofed with clay tiles. Roof pitches are mostly steep, at, or about, 45 degrees. Slate and concrete roof tiles are used on many of the newer houses. Many houses are set back from the road behind hedges, fences or brick walls within their own garden. Orchard Drive and Brookfields stand out as an exception, with a more open plan layout.

Planning Context

Little Comberton's attractive landscape setting has been recognised for many years. In 1966 the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated covering the Cotswolds and Bredon Hill; the initial designation included the older part of the village. The boundary was extended in 1990 to include land to the north of the main Elmley Castle to Pershore Road.

Little Comberton's Conservation Area was designated in 1969, and it was noted in the 1998 Wychavon District Local Plan that the settlement has the character of a rural hamlet with "a number of listed buildings which are loosely grouped around Manor Lane, enclosing a large area of open space. The relationship of the buildings, the spaces between them and the wider setting of the listed buildings and the open countryside, all contribute to the character of the Conservation Area."



The 2006 Wychavon Local Plan included a Development Boundary for the village. This is maintained in the adopted 2016 South Worcestershire Development Plan. The village is identified in the SWDP as a Category 4A village as it is without a shop, school or pub and hence has limited scope for additional future development. Within the development boundary limited infill development is acceptable, outside the boundary development will be strictly controlled, especially in designated areas such as the AONB. These designations are shown on page 11 with listed buildings set out at the end of this document on page 12.

The findings of the 2006 Little Comberton Parish Plan broadly supported Wychavon's long standing approach to development in Little Comberton, with the conversion of redundant buildings, small scale infilling and single dwellings in controlled locations being the preferred forms of development, with only 6% of the population favouring larger groups of new dwellings.



Roads and Infrastructure

The road pattern in the parish is virtually unchanged from its historic layout. Various minor changes occurred with the Inclosure in 1806 and during the 1960s a new road, Orchard Drive, served the bungalow development. Otherwise the only changes have been to a few road names such as Gig Mire becoming Pool Close. In 1961 iron fences replaced hedges on

the sharp bends in an attempt to improve visibility, and these have become an important feature of the roadsides in the village.

Despite the introduction of a 30mph speed limit in 1999, and several traffic calming measures such as white gates on the approaches to the village, the speed of traffic has consistently been a concern for residents.

Flooding and drainage

There have been several flooding episodes in recent years which have impacted on a number of premises. Drainage and ditch work has been undertaken by Wychavon District Council, Worcestershire County Council and local landowners to reduce flood risk. Village residents remain concerned, however, about the possibility of flooding caused by surface water run-off from new hard surfaces and the capacity of the sewage farm to cater for additional development.

Feedback from January 2015 Consultation

The following comments give a flavour of the responses to the questions asked during consultation on the Village Design Statement when thirty six households responded by questionnaire, and others attended a discussion with Parish Council members. They represent the general consensus of views from a wide cross-section of the community.



The Old Manor House

Question 1 - What do you like about Little Comberton?

Rural Setting

- A very attractive, neat, well maintained historic village in a wonderful rural setting at the foot of Bredon Hill in the Cotswolds AONB
- Glimpses between houses of Bredon Hill and the Malverns - views onto attractive and unspoilt open countryside are among the best in England
- The Church from the old orchards
- Access to a good footpath network, giving easy access to Bredon Hill Mixed hedges and Cotswold stone walls fronting the road, rural verges with wildflowers
- Open spaces within the village (along Manor Lane and Wick Road) add to the rural character, and enhance settings of buildings
- Wide range of trees, including some large specimens around older houses and the church, and the old orchards to the east of Wick Road
- No street lights so stars can be seen at night
- Proximity to wildlife and a working farm environment.



The Old Rectory

Historic buildings and their settings

- Historic settlement pattern and survival of original village footprint
- Some beautiful and unspoilt large houses which are listed buildings, the 'Jewel in the Crown' of Manor Lane
- Good diversity of building styles, with no extremes of architecture but blending with each other, using local materials such as thatch, timber framing, soft red brick, clay roof tiles and some Cotswold stone.

Sense of Community

- Retains the old Worcestershire village character; the friendly village atmosphere and community spirit haven't really changed much for at least 50 years
- The people who live here and the caring community, centred around the village hall
A beautiful village, the residents are proud of it and love it
- Small intimate character, it feels a safe place to live with little crime
- Proximity to good amenities i.e. Pershore, Cheltenham, Evesham.
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Question 2- What do you dislike?

- Inappropriate development that spoils the feel and appearance of the village
- Redundant/derelict farm buildings on the entrance to, and in the middle of the village, are unsightly and should be put to more beneficial use
- Lack of community open space and local amenities such as shop, play area, pub
- Ongoing drainage and sewage issues for Pershore Road/Orchard Drive residents and risk of flooding
- Speed of vehicles on main road
- Lack of safe footpath/cycle path into Pershore
- Deterioration of road edges, particularly in Wick Road and Manor Lane
- Overgrown hedges
- Lack of hedges and mature trees around the fields north of the village the crossroads

Question 3 - What could/should change in the future?

The following represent a sample of the range of comments received. While it is recognised that many of these go beyond the scope of a village design statement, they are included here as views that residents were keen to articulate.

- Any future proposed development should be infilling only
- Small scale 'organic' growth, preferably affordable housing as the village does need to look forward

- Some planned development should be promoted to tidy up certain areas and provide good, reasonably priced housing (particularly for the young). The designated development area as it stands may need amending.
- Development should not extend into the open countryside and should not just be executive housing - it should not extend the existing development boundary
- The brownfield sites should be used for building houses and only when these sites are filled should greenfield sites be considered for building development
- Any growth should be gradual so that the existing character of the village is not overwhelmed
- Due to existing limitations such as the sewage system no further significant development should be permitted
- The character of the village and the AONB need to be preserved when considering any conversions/new build
- Planning permission for applications of an extreme nature which do not blend with the present mix of architecture should be opposed
- A small area is needed for a village green/play area for recreational use by all sections of the community
- Replant old orchards
- Ensure that existing metalled surfaces are well maintained and fit for purpose
- Continue to encourage a sense of pride in the community to promote the upkeep and appearance of the village
- Consideration should be given to providing a designated parking area at the top of Manor Lane to serve St Peter's



Manor Lane

Design Guidelines

The following design guidelines have been drawn up to reflect the range of comments received during consultation, whilst focusing on the need to ensure that new development respects the distinctive visual character of the village.

- In accordance with the South Worcestershire Development Plan, development should only be permitted within the settlement boundary and where it would preserve and enhance the Conservation Area and the village as a whole. Development within the AONB should conserve and enhance the character, appearance and special qualities of the landscape
- Fields and open spaces within the village (e.g. paddocks in Manor Lane and Wick Road) should be protected
- Overdevelopment of plots where the size of the house, extensions or outbuildings are out of proportion to the garden should be avoided
- The character of village entrances should be protected and ideally enhanced
- Mature trees (other than leylandii) should be retained where possible or replaced
- Alterations and extensions to buildings should respect the original or aim to improve the appearance and contribution to the village scene

- The use of a soft red brick, plain clay roof tiles and oak framing are welcome forms of construction
- High quality modern design should not be ruled out, but it should enhance its setting and be appropriate in scale. New buildings should be set back behind hedges or walls of traditional construction and materials. Cotswold stone walls should be retained wherever possible
- Each dwelling should include sufficient off-street parking screened from the road
- The use of permeable materials such as reinforced grass or gravel for parking is encouraged as this reduces runoff and gives a softer appearance

Possible Improvements

- Encourage hedge planting or Cotswold stone walls on existing frontages, where appropriate
- Encourage measures to improve the entrances to the village, especially on Pershore Road and Wick Road
- Look for opportunities to promote orchard planting in and around the village
- Encourage landowners and tenants to keep their front gardens, road frontages and verges tidy and not too overgrown
- Explore the scope for an open space for villagers to use, including the provision of allotment space
- Continue to explore ways to reduce vehicle speeds avoiding a proliferation of urban signs/infrastructure



Lantern Cottage



The Old Manor House

Listed Buildings in Little Comberton

Name on Listing Document	Currently (2015) <i>known as</i>	Address	Grade
Church of St Peter	Church of St Peter	Manor Lane	II*
Barn adjoining Fern Dairy on NW	Tythe Court	Manor Lane	II
Barn & Outbuildings approx.30yds North West of Nash's Farmhouse	Twinton Orchard and The Barn	Pershore Road (Elmley Road)	II
Barn to North of Manor House	Barn to North of Manor House	Manor Lane	II
Belle's Cottage	Belle's Cottage	Manor Lane	II
Dovecote at Manor House	Dovecote at Manor House	Manor Lane	II
Dovecote at Nash's Farm	Dovecote at Nash's Farm	Pershore Road (Elmley Road)	II
Fern Dairy	Fern Dairy	Manor Lane	II
Lantern Cottage	Lantern Cottage	Wick Road	II
Manor House	Manor House	Manor Lane	II
Meadow Cottage	Meadow Cottage	Manor Lane	II
Nash's Farmhouse	Nash's Farmhouse	Pershore Road (Elmley Road)	II
Old house Farmhouse	Old House Farm	Wick Road	II
Orchard View & Tudor Cottage	Orchard View & Tudor Cottage	Manor Lane	II
Post Office	Post Box Cottage	Manor Lane	II
Stoneside	Teaspoon House	Manor Lane	II
The Laurels	Old Manor Cottage	Manor Lane	II
The Old House	The Old Manor House	Pershore Road	II
The Old Thatch	The Old Thatch	Pershore Road	II
Wayside Cottage	April Cottage	Manor Lane	II
Windrush	Windrush	Wick Road	II
War Memorial	War Memorial	Wick Road Crossroads	II

