Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals

Shepton Mallet
This appraisal aims to identify the essential elements that give an area its character. It is, therefore, a ‘snapshot’ in time. Elements and details of an area may be important even if they are not specifically referred to in the text.

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PART 1 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

1 Summary

1.1 Key characteristics of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area

Shepton Mallet is a historic market town with its origins dating back to Roman times. It is located on the River Sheppey and is notable for its medieval church and market place, historic development along the valley of the River Sheppey between Charlton and Darshill, and open fields and private grounds south of the former Somerset and Dorset railway. The special interest that justifies designation of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historical and environmental factors including:

- Rural location on the southern margins of the Mendip Hills on either bank of the River Sheppey;
- Medieval town centre stands above a string of historic former industrial settlements along the river valley namely, Darshill, Bowlish, Draycott, Longbridge, Lower Lane, Garston Street, Charlton;
- The architectural and historic quality of the area’s historic buildings, 189 of which are listed and many others which make a positive contribution to the area’s historic character and appearance;
- Variety of building types with many good examples of industrial (textiles and brewing), religious (especially non-conformist), and residential buildings;
- Prevalent use of locally quarried Forest Marble and Doulting stone and the predominance of terracotta/brown/red clay tiles – either Bridgwater pantiles or double/triple/ Roman tiles;
- Valley bottom characterised by a haphazard mix of 17th and 18th century cottages, mill owner’s houses and mills built as a result of the rapid growth of the early woollen industry;
- St Peter and St Paul’s Church and churchyard with a tranquil atmosphere enhanced by mature trees and areas of historic paving;
- Market Place and its historic cross, shambles and drinking fountain;
- The Anglo Brewery and HM Prison;
- 17th, 18th and 19th century artisans’ houses in Garston Street, predominantly 19th century expansion along Waterloo Road and Princes Road;
- Historic shopfronts and recent ‘traditional’ shopfronts;
- Darshill and Bowlish which have the character and appearance of rural hamlets;
• Part of the course of former Somerset and Dorset Railway and Great Western Railway;
• Trees and tree groups within the open spaces and specimen trees in private gardens;
• Old stone walls.

1.2 Key issues of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area

General

• Vacant commercial properties;
• Low economic vitality along Town Street;
• Tree management;
• Control of on-street parking in residential areas;
• Demolition of historic buildings;
• Need for full conservation area boundary review;

Buildings

• Lack of routine maintenance and repair, three listed buildings at risk;
• Loss of architectural details such as timber windows, doors and chimneys is eroding the historic character and appearance of the area;
• Insensitive alterations to historic buildings;
• Garish shopfronts that are out of character with the host building;
• 20th century development that does not harmonise with the conservation area;
• Poor quality cement re-pointing of historic stonework;
• Obtrusive garages that have an adverse impact on the streetscene;
• Satellite dishes spoiling the facades of historic buildings;

The Anglo Brewery (1864), Commercial Road
Opportunity sites

- Derelict and vacant central site (Little Ostry) adjacent to architecturally bland and poorly maintained buildings off Great Ostry (former works) and Commercial Road (vacant former garage);
- Unkempt space at west end of Lower Lane (site of former mill building);
- Pedestrian gateway at the north end of Town Street which gives a poor impression of the town centre;
- Former Anglo Brewery site;
- Rectory Road lacks historic interest and is unrepresentative of the quality of the town centre's historic buildings;
- Vacant area by Lower Lane/Barrendown Lane bridge;
- Regal Road;
- Vacant public house in Bowlish (Horseshoe Inn).

Public realm

- Poorly maintained pavements - gum and stains on new stone paving, tarmac replacement of natural stone slabs;
- Obtrusive overhead wires and wiring on building facades;
- Visual intrusion of wheelie bins upon historic streetscene;
- Litter and graffiti are problematic in certain areas;
- Finger-posts in need of maintenance or renewal;
- Mix of street lighting columns and fittings and variance in type and level of street lighting in town centre;
- Conservation of historic floorscape;

Shepton's lively roofscape
2 Introduction

2.1 The Shepton Mallet Conservation Area

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 The purpose of a conservation area character appraisal

Section 71 of the above Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.

Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. This document is written in the light of these statutory requirements. It is in conformity with English Heritage guidance as set out in “Guidance on conservation area appraisals” (August 2005) and “Guidance on the management of conservation areas” (August 2005). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within “Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment” (PPG15).

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define and record the special interest of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area and identify the issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area (in the form of the “Character Appraisal”);

- Provide guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement (in the form of the “Management Proposals”).

The omission of a particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

2.3 The planning policy context

The Mendip District Local Plan which sets out the Council’s policies and proposals for the development and the use of land in Mendip now and in the future was adopted in December 2002 and covers the period to 2011.

In due course the Mendip Local Plan will be reviewed and rolled forward to
cover the period to 2016 in what will now be called a Local Development Framework. This new planning system was established by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which abolishes Structure and Local Plans and replaces them with Local Development Documents. More information about this important change to the planning system can be found on the District Council’s website: www.mendip.gov.uk.

The Local Development Framework will conform to the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy - the South West’s development strategy for the next 20 years. The Regional Spatial Strategy is still in preparation. The Somerset County Council and the Exmoor National Park Authority Joint Structure Plan was adopted on 20 April 2000. The Plan is currently under review.

2.4 Other initiatives

The Council successfully secured funding from English Heritage’s Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) in 2003. The grant was for a total of £355,000 to be spent over three years on repairs to the structure and external historic fabric of traditional properties, and on public realm works.

A bid has also been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund to secure additional funding for the town through the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). The bid has received preliminary Stage 1 approval from the HLF. The Shepton Mallet Area Regeneration Programme 2007-2008 covers the settlement of Shepton Mallet but also seeks to build a relationship between the town and its rural hinterland. Its aim is to help to create vitality and viability in the town centre and promote social and economic prosperity within the area through a programme of community partnership schemes.
3 Location and landscape setting

3.1 Location and activities

The market town of Shepton Mallet lies in a rural location in the County of Somerset approximately 17 miles south of Bath, 20 miles south east of Bristol and 6 miles to the east of Wells. The main settlement lies to the west of the crossing of the east-west A361/A371 route from Wells to Frome and the north-south A37 route from Bath to Yeovil. A large part of the conservation area lies along the valley of the River Sheppey.

The town as a whole has a population of almost 9,000. It has a broad economic base of commercial activity including textiles, brewing, haulage and engineering. Agriculture and quarrying are of major importance in the wider context. The town centre contains a range of commercial shops, services and facilities nearly all of which are located along the north-south spine of the town in Town Street and High Street. A market is held in the market place every Friday. The Bath and West Agricultural Show is held annually on a site to the south of the town (outside the conservation area).

The Anglo Trading Estate and Charlton Trading Estate are discrete areas dedicated to small businesses, the former in an urban setting, the latter in a rural setting. The conservation area contains several active places of worship, schools and H.M.Prison.

Darshill and Bowlish, to the west of the town, have the character and appearance of rural hamlets. Except for Bowlish House, a hotel and restaurant, neither village have any shops or services (a former pub in Bowlish is currently closed).

Public footpaths cross the open space to the north of the town centre and form part of the East Mendip Way, a waymarked footpath from Wells to Frome. These, and other rural local footpaths, link with town footpaths to provide easy access between town and country.

The area is notable for the re-use of historic buildings, mainly former industrial buildings and large houses converted to flats.

3.2 Topography and geology

Shepton Mallet lies on the southern margins of the Mendip Hills between approximately 100 to 150 metres above sea level on either bank of the River Sheppey as it flows westward from the Mendips. It stands close to the interface between the highland landscape of the Mendips and the rolling clay vales to the south. The area is geologically founded on Forest Marble, Blue Lias and Oolitic limestone.
The greater part of the settlement and the town’s historic heart lies above the Sheppey’s southern bank, but the river itself is rarely visible in the town. At Charlton parts of the river have been culverted and the river flows below ground through much of Shepton Mallet.

There is a gentle northward incline from Waterloo Bridge up Town Street and High Street and a much steeper incline upwards from Draycott Road to Pike Lane. Similarly the land rises north of the Sheppey up Waterloo Road and Cowl Street.

3.3 Relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings

The conservation area covers most of the 19th century extent of the town plus adjoining open spaces that makes a positive contribution to the area’s setting. Twentieth century residential areas to the south and west of the town’s historic core are not included.

To the east, the embanked course of the former Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway, including two viaducts, forms a physical and visual barrier between the town and the wider landscape which is characterised by undulating countryside with flat topped hills.

Shepton is distinctive in the way that the surrounding countryside is easily accessible from the town - this is especially noticeable in the eastern and western extremities of the conservation area i.e. Charlton, Bowlish, Darshill which have a closer relationship to the surrounding countryside than to the town centre.

There are three strongly identifiable arrival points or ‘gateways’ to the north, south and west of the town. The approach to the town along Cannard’s Grave Road and the western approach through Darshill and Bowlish are notable because roadside trees and green open spaces create a rural atmosphere and bring the countryside close to the town centre. Arriving from the north down Waterloo Road there is a long axial view towards the town centre.
4 Historic development and archaeology

4.1 Historic development of Shepton Mallet Conservation Area

Origins and historic development:

The site of the town of Shepton Mallet gives access to the resources of both the Levels and the Mendips, including good agricultural land and sheep pastures, building stone and water power.

Archaeology is now demonstrating that, like the rest of the Mendips, Shepton’s valley has been the scene of human activity since at least the neolithic period. No neolithic settlement structures have yet been located, but many artefacts have come from the rising ground south of the modern town; and in the same area the remains of iron age farmsteads have been found (at Cannard’s Grave, near Field Farm and possibly underlying part of the Roman town).

A Roman settlement has recently been discovered on the south east margins of Shepton Mallet (outside the conservation area), flanking the Fosse Way.

Exploratory excavations have confirmed the good survival of the archaeological remains of a significant and long lived settlement, including important evidence of industrial activity. The site, dating to between the first and fourth centuries AD, is now a Scheduled Monument (no. 22803). Though the extent of the settlement (second only to Ilchester in the county) has only been realised recently, the area along Fosse Way has been producing finds for well over a century. It is not known how much continuity there was between the prehistoric settlements and the recently discovered Roman settlement which straddles the Fosse Way between modern Charlton and Cannard’s Grave. The Fosse Way, the main Roman road into the South-West, was an important factor in the Roman settlement pattern and the major reason for the location of Shepton’s Roman settlement may have been its position half way between Bath and Ilchester. It is not yet clear how long the Roman settlement continued to be occupied after the 4th century, though archaeology now suggests it was at least into the 5th century.

Shepton itself is first mentioned by name, as Sceaptun (the sheep farm), in the Domesday Survey, though an 8th century charter granted the land in which it lay (part of the Pilton estates) to Glastonbury Abbey. By Domesday there were already many sheep, a mill, and, one assumes, a village, at Shepton, which was held from the Abbey by the Courcelles family.

In the medieval period, Shepton was one of a number of small settlements along the Sheppey valley. It appears to have been deliberately developed as a commercial enterprise, either by Glastonbury Abbey or by the Mallet family (who held the manor from the Abbey by the 14th century).
A market and fair charter was granted in 1235 and though this was subsequently suppressed after objections by Wells, further market and fair grants were made in 1260 and 1318. A planned urban core may have been laid out, and though no borough was ever established, the amounts of tax which were raised in Shepton in the medieval period testify to its prosperity, which was firmly based on the woollen industry.

Though the overlordship of the town reverted to the Crown at the Dissolution (being granted to the Duchy of Cornwall in 1536), there was little disruption to the town’s life. Shepton continued to thrive in the post-medieval period, and its continued significance was underlined by the placing of the county prison there in the early 17th century.

In the 17th and 18th centuries the town expanded eastward along the river, where were built the mills on which its prosperity rested. Shepton itself, and the outlying settlements, became populous, industrialised settlements. A local historian in 1791 described an industry employing about four and a half thousand people in the valley but the streets of Shepton, according to his account, were narrow and dirty. The original cloth-making industry declined during the early part of the 19th century. However, other industries, such as silk manufacture, brewing and cheese making, were growing to take its place.

Trade directories of the mid/late 19th century give a picture of a town in recovery from the economic threat imposed by the failure of the cloth industry. Efforts were made to improve the urban fabric and the communications system, by, for example, the construction of Waterloo Road and Bridge in the 1820s and Commercial Road in the 1840s.

The arrival of the railways from the 1850s onwards (Great Western in 1858, Somerset and Dorset in 1874) was a boost to the town’s economy. Brewing became a major industry in the late 19th century, e.g. Charlton Brewery (1844) and Anglo Brewery (1864) followed in the 20th century by Showerings of Babycham fame in Kilver Street.
During the Second World War, Shepton was used as a haven for evacuees and vital records, including the Domesday Book. After the War, Shepton began to decline again as a result of, amongst others, the closure of the railway stations and a fall in employment opportunities. In the 1960s and 1970s, the conservation area underwent many changes, notably the building of the Hillmead housing estate and the Academy (former Amulet) theatre and retail development, resulting in the loss of many historic buildings. The construction of Rectory Road in the 1970s radically altered the flow of traffic through the town.

Today, Shepton Mallet has a population of approximately 9,000 and is described on the Town Council’s website as “a delightful mixture of old and new; a combination of ancient market town and modern industrial community”.

4.2 Archaeological significance and potential

The conservation area contains archaeological evidence of settlement from Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano British periods. There are two Scheduled Monuments in the area: the Market Cross in the Market Place, and two bowl barrows at Barren Down.

An archaeological assessment of Shepton Mallet was commissioned by English Heritage and published in 2003 as part of the English Heritage Somerset Extensive Urban Survey. The report, which can be accessed via the Somerset County Council website at www.somerset.gov.uk states, “Shepton’s iron age and Roman remains have been and still are of paramount importance to archaeologists...questions also remain to be answered about later periods, of which the chief may be the location of the late Roman and Saxon settlements (and the process of transition to the medieval town) and the location and study of the many post-medieval (or earlier) mill sites.”

Much of the conservation area lies with an Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP), as defined in the Mendip District Local Plan.
5 Spatial analysis

5.1 Plan form and layout

This is an urban conservation area with rural (Darshill, Bowlish) and semi-rural (Charlton) outliers. Having developed organically over the past 1000 years the town has an irregular plan form dispersed around a network of medieval and 19th/20th century roads and streets.

Development is denser in the town centre than the more spacious suburbs. The valley bottom is characterised by a haphazard close-knit mix of cottages, mill owner’s houses and mills built as a result of the rapid growth of the early woollen industry. Narrow pedestrian alleys are typical. In contrast, HM Prison, The Anglo Trading Estate and, to a much lesser extent, the Charlton Trading Estate, are self contained sites dominated by large buildings and lack of soft landscaping.

There is a lack of uniformity in buildings’ relationship to thoroughfare although most pre-19th century cottages open directly upon the street, lacking front gardens.

Three storeys, sometimes four, are common in the commercial spine of Town Street and High Street. Two storeys is the norm for vernacular cottages though more prestigious buildings are greater in height. Former mill buildings and other industrial buildings have a large mass and size that tend to dominate their surroundings.

5.2 Landmarks, focal points and views

The town’s main landmarks are the Market Cross, the tower of St Peter and St Paul’s Church, the façade of the former Anglo Brewery, the railway viaducts and HM Prison. Being the most highly located of these, it is the Anglo Brewery that is the most iconic building in Shepton although its robust Victorian architecture is at odds with the general character of the town.

Significant views are marked on the accompanying Townscape Appraisal Map, notably long distance views of the church tower and Anglo Brewery especially from the far side of the valley. Within the centre of the conservation area there are intimate views of church from adjacent alleys but it is visually cut off from the market place. From the town’s bridges and valley sides there are long views which include the area’s distinctive local roofscape of gables, dormers, chimneys and the ‘frozen waves’ of rolled clay roof tiles. From the fringes of the conservation area, views of surrounding country testify to the town’s location in rural Somerset.
5.3 Open spaces, trees and other natural features

**Spaces:**

- Spaces important to the setting of the conservation area: Barren Down (crossed by public footpaths) and the grounds of Princes Lodge (private);
- Significant spaces that contribute positively to townscape: Market Place, Town Street (pedestrianised), Leg Square, Longbridge, environs of St Peter and St Paul’s Church, open grassed area between Cornhill and Garston Street, grassed area at lower end of Rectory Road (west side), former millpond at Darshill;
- Spaces that detract from townscape: Little Ostry (the derelict area of land to the west of the High Street between Commercial Street and Great Ostry), public car parks especially in Rectory Road and Regal Road;
- Spaces important to the setting of large houses and schools: Princes Road (north side), Hill Lane (south side), grounds of The Priory and Sales House (between Pike Hill and Draycott Road), forecourt of Bowlish House;

**Trees:**

- Trees are not common within the town centre but form part of the rural atmosphere of Charlton, Darshill and Bowlish;
- Most significant town centre trees are those around St Peter and Paul’s Church (limes planted in 1733) and in the Great Ostry Car Park (some of which survive from the grounds of the former Rectory);
- Other specimen trees can be found in private gardens e.g. No. 2/3 Waterloo Road and Carlton Court, Princes Road;
- Groups of trees and other greenery are common in large private gardens, most notably in Princes Road, Lower Lane, the slope north of The Priory and Sales House, east of the main road past Darshill;
- Trees are a feature of the open space to the north of the town and along the former railways;
- Trees within the grounds of Princes Lodge, including an avenue beside the entrance drive, form a backdrop to northward views from the town;
Other natural features:

- River Sheppey is a feature of the town but is rarely seen in the central area being culverted for most of its length through Shepton;
- River Sheppey is a visible distinctive element within Darshill and Bowlish together with various leats, weirs and mill races;
- Best views of the river are at Darshill and Bowlish and, to a lesser extent, at the end of Draycott Road, Lower Lane and Charlton;
- Restored former millpond in Charlton and overgrown former millpond in Darshill are a haven for waterfowl and aquatic flora;
- The ecological interest of the former railway tracks has increased over time and has developed a particular natural habitat.

5.4 Public realm

Most items within the public realm e.g. pavements, highways, lighting columns etc are modern but there are significant, though scattered and isolated, areas of historic paving that make a positive contribution to the area and enhance the setting of adjacent buildings. The most notable areas of old stone paving can be found around the Church of St Peter and Paul. Particular features of interest in the public realm are noted individually in Section 7, the analysis of character areas.
6 The buildings of the conservation area

6.1 Building types

- Places of worship: St Peter and St Paul’s Church, Baptist Church (Commercial Road), Baptist Chapel (Garston Street), Congregational (Commercial Road), Unitarian (Cowl Street), Methodist (Paul Street);
- Mill owners’ houses: Edengrove House (Leg Square), Manor House (Leg Square), Bowlish House, Old Bowlish House;
- Industrial (textile): Old Silk Mill (Coombe Lane), mill at Sales House, Forum Terrace, Bowlish (former velvet mill), Ham Mill, Bowlish (fulling mill);
- Industrial (brewing): Anglo Brewery (1864), former brewery buildings in Charlton (1844) and Lower Lane (part of former Sherring’s Brewery);
- Industrial (other): former Town Mill, Leg Square (corn mill and bakery), cheese and butter store, Draycott Road;
- Schools: The Old Grammar School (1627), former 19th century senior school in Waterloo Road, infants school in Waterloo Road, St Paul’s Junior School;
- Almshouses and Hospital: Strode and those on north side of churchyard, former Shepton Mallet District Hospital (Princes Road);
- Commercial: Nineteenth century banks – HSBC, Lloyds and NatWest, former Magistrates’ Court in Commercial Road;
- Public houses: The Bell Hotel, Kings Arms (Leg Square), Wine Vaults (High Street);
- Residential: range from large houses (e.g. 22 Tipcote Hill) to weavers’ cottages (e.g. Longbridge and Garston Street);
- Bridges: Waterloo Bridge, bridge over Cowl Street, smaller bridges over Sheppey;
6.2 Listed buildings

There are 189 listed buildings in Shepton Mallet of which 189 lie within the conservation area, representing over 6% of the stock within Mendip District. They range in date from the 16th to the 20th centuries. The majority are listed grade II but nine buildings or structures are listed at higher grades signifying their outstanding architectural or historic interest, as follows:

Grade I:
Church of St Peter and St Paul.

Grade II*:
No. 8 Market Place; Former Anglo Brewery, Commercial Road; Bowlish House, Coombe Lane, Bowlish; HM Prison and perimeter wall, Corn Hill; Park House, Forum Lane, Bowlish; Old Bowlish House, Forum Lane, Bowlish; Charlton Viaduct, Kilver Street; Market Cross, Market Place;

6.3 ‘Positive’ buildings

The Townscape Analysis map identifies a large number of unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Generally, these ‘positive’ buildings are individual or groups of buildings that retain all, or a high proportion, of their original architectural detailing and that add interest and vitality to the appearance of the conservation area. Most of them date from the 18th or 19th century. Where they have been too heavily altered, and restoration is not easily achievable, they are excluded. Occasionally, an unlisted building of merit may not be marked on the map because its special features or historic interest is not easily evident from the public viewpoint, so the Townscape Appraisal map should not be taken as definitive.

6.4 Building materials and local details

Stone is the prevailing walling material, mainly locally quarried Forest Marble and Doulting stone although prestigious post-railway buildings, e.g. banks, are built with stone from further afield, such as Bath stone instantly recognisable as alien because of its distinctively different colour.

The earlier houses are of random or coursed Forest Marble with plenty of mortar showing due to the unevenness of the stone. By the mid 19th century coursing was much more regular and
the individual building stones were larger and more carefully dressed. Some of the buildings now with exposed rubble previously had a rendered finish.

Ashlar is used on the facades of grand buildings with architectural pretensions, e.g. Bowlish House, but ashlar facades are exceptional rather than characteristic. In early buildings, quoins are barely distinguishable from the wailing material or are larger rubble stones; in later buildings the quoins are of carefully dressed Bath or Doulting stone.

Render, both smooth and roughcast, is common but there is only occasional use of brick, almost exclusively from the post-railway era. Roughcast render scribed with lines to emulate ashlar can sometimes be seen, at nos. 1 and 3 Waterloo Road for instance.

Shepton has a lively roofscape arising from the rippling surface created by the predominance of terracotta/brown/red clay tiles, either Bridgwater pantiles or double/triple/ Roman tiles.

Blue-grey Welsh slates are common especially in the Waterloo Road area. There is one instance of thatch in

Charlton and a small shed to the rear of St Peter and Paul’s Church is unusually roofed with stone tiles, though this would once have been more common. There is at least one example of diagonally hung ‘promenade’ slates in Peter Street.

Roof structures have developed in accordance with national trends and local needs, abandoning the old custom of gable ends fronting the street and embracing the double pile pitched roofs behind parapet roofs running parallel to the street. Mansard roofs both with and without parapets are common.

Ashlar dressings are important features of Shepton Mallet. Masons embellished properties with carved door and window surrounds, ornamental canopies and door cases. Water tabling, label moulds and corbels supporting copings are common local features.

Chimney stacks are of stone or brick. Surviving traditional window joinery is painted softwood. Stone mullioned windows with side-hung casements were common until the 17th century. Later houses have vertical sliding sashes or, in small cottages, two-light casements.
6.5 Local features of interest

The distinctive local identity of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area is enhanced by a number of features and historic elements that cumulatively help to give the conservation area a distinctive sense of place. They include, for instance, areas of historic paving (e.g. around the church and in Leg Square), stone walls, commonly with cock and hen coping (e.g. Coombe Lane), stonework embellished with datestones and ammonites, iron railings and smaller items such as footscrapers and street name signs.

Bridges are significant elements in the townscape notably bridges over the Sheppey, the two railway viaducts and the bridge over Cowl Street leading to the cemetery.

6.6 Shopfronts, advertisements and signs

Shopfronts, advertisements and signs are a feature of the commercial area. There are a number of whole or partly altered historic shopfronts and some good examples of modern replicas. However, many shopfronts have been altered or are completely modern and these often display a variety of poorly designed details, for example the former Post Office. The most common problems are:

- Over-deep fascias, hiding original features;
- Use of garish colours;
- Use of plastic lettering and over-dominant lighting.

Road signs and traffic lights, though necessary to control traffic and pedestrian movement, are sometimes poorly sighted in relation to listed buildings and contribute to a distracting visual clutter.

A-boards along High Street and Town Street can be a hazard to pedestrians and are unsightly.

6.7 General condition of the area and built fabric

The general condition of the area and its built fabric is good although there is evidence of a lack of routine maintenance and repair in the town centre and some private residences. Three listed buildings are considered to be at risk of serious decay. They are: No. 6 Coombe Lane, the summerhouse at Sales House and the former Anglo Brewery.
7 Character areas

The Shepton Mallet Conservation Area can be roughly divided into five separate character areas each with its own characteristics defined by date or historic form and layout, and current and past uses and activities. These five character areas are:

Character area 1:
Town centre including Commercial Road and the Anglo Trading Estate;

Character area 2:
Sheppey valley including Hill Lane, Pike Lane, Cowl Street and HM Prison;

Character area 3:
Waterloo Road, Princes Road and open space south of the former railway (Barren Down and the grounds of Princes Lodge);

Character area 4:
Darshill and Bowlish;

Character area 5:
Charlton and the Charlton Viaduct

The full extent of each character areas is shown on the accompanying ‘Character areas map’.

7.1 Character area 1: Town centre including Commercial Road and the Anglo Trading Estate

Principal features

- Historic heart of Shepton containing a large number of buildings of architectural interest - many are listed, others make a positive contribution to historic character and appearance;
- Key buildings: St Peter and St Paul’s Church, Medieval Cross, 27 Peter Street, 8 Market Place and 4 Paul Street;
- Market Place and its historic cross, shambles and drinking fountain;
- Commercial activity focussed on the historic spine (part-pedestrianised) along High Street and Town Street;
- The Academy and 1970s development on the east side of Town Street;
- Historic shopfronts and recent ‘traditional’ shopfronts;
- Historic development in Peter Street, Paul Street, Great Ostry;
- Tranquil atmosphere around St Peter and St Paul’s Church;
- Historic paving around churchyard of St Peter and St Paul’s Church;
- Trees around St Peter and St Paul’s Church and in the Great Ostry Car Park;
- Anglo Brewery;

Location, topography

- Commercial core of Shepton Mallet beside main north-south and east-west traffic routes;
- The southern part of the area has a generally level topography above the valley of the River Sheppey;

Wheelie bins can be unsightly and spoil the historic streetscene
• High Street has a gentle slope northwards and the descent to the river becomes more pronounced north of the Market Place, Great Ostry and St Paul’s Church;
• Side streets and alleys (e.g. Great Ostry, Church Lane) add to the permeability of the area;

Historical development

• High Street and Town Street may have been laid out when the town was developed in the 13th century across earlier settlement;
• Medieval market place was probably considerably larger than the present area;
• Regular property boundaries either side of High Street and Town Street suggest that these may have been laid out as tenement blocks. Those south of Paul Street project beyond the central urban block which surrounded the market and may, therefore, be a later extension;
• The probable medieval tenements today contain buildings of late 18th and 19th century origin indicating the extent of redevelopment which took place in that period (and has continued in the late 20th century);

Uses

• Commercial Road was constructed in the 19th century. The Anglo Estate dates from mid 19th century;
• Rectory Road was cut through the margins of the historic town in the 1970s;
• Commercial and business uses predominate;
• Residential uses on the fringe of the character area;
• Shops, financial and professional services, cafes, drinking establishments, take-aways and public library located along the commercial spine of High Street and Town Street with the main focus of activity in High Street;
• Theatre, now venue for Bristol Academy of Performing Arts;
• Anglo Trading Estate and tyre and exhaust workshop in Regal Road are the only significant areas of general industrial use;
• Public car parking: Great Ostry and Regal Road are two of the the town centre’s main car parks;
• Town Street and northern end of High Street has been pedestrianised, south end of High Street has been narrowed to create more pedestrian friendly environment.
Townscape and architectural character

- Continuous development along both sides of High Street and Town Street with lateral side streets, alleys and former carriageway entrances;
- Predominantly two- and three-storeys, exceptionally rising to four storeys;
- L-shaped open space of the Market Place;
- Great Ostry contains a row of cottages uncharacteristically set back from the road with small front gardens;
- Uncharacteristic open space (now a car park) in urban townscape on the east side of Rectory Road (formed in the grounds of the former rectory that was demolished in the 1970s to make way for Rectory Road);
- Twentieth century developments on east side of Town Street and west side of Rectory Road;

Local features of interest

- Grade II listed K6 telephone box;
- Gate piers to houses in Commercial Road and Paul Street;
- Arched entrance from Town Street to demolished rectory;
- Iron railings around church;
- Localised areas of natural stone paving.

Negative features

- Vacant commercial properties;
- Low economic vitality along Town Street;
- Lack of maintenance and repair of buildings, including at least one ‘building at risk’;
- Loss of architectural details such as timber windows, doors and chimneys;
- Insensitive alterations to historic buildings;
- Derelict and vacant central site (Little Ostry);
- Architecturally bland and poorly maintained buildings off Great Ostry (former works) and Commercial Road (vacant former garage);
- 20th century development (e.g. The Academy and Co-op Store) that does not fit in with the historic town centre;
- Pedestrian gateway at the north end of Town Street gives a poor impression of the town centre to those approaching from the north;
- The Co-op building on the corner of Commercial Road and High Street is completely out of character with the conservation area;
- The former Anglo Brewery which has been identified as a building at risk;
- Rectory Road lacks historic interest and is unrepresentative of the quality of the town centre’s historic buildings;
- Regal Road is an area in need of improvement and enhancement;
- Untended gardens and off street parking at Great Ostry;
- Gum and stains on new stone paving. Tarmac replacement of natural stone slabs;
- Unsympathetic orange street lighting which does not respect historic buildings;
- Vacant properties beside western gateway along Commercial Road;
- Garish shopfronts that are out of character with the host building;
- Localised graffiti.

### 7.2 Character area 2: Sheppey valley including Hill Lane, Pike Lane, Cowl Street and HM Prison

#### Principal features

- Four distinct areas associated with former mills dotted along the valley bottom containing a large number of buildings of architectural interest;
- Key buildings: Chapel in Cowl Street, Longbridge House, Nos 2, 3 and 4 Longbridge, Whitstone House, Edengrove and The Hollies;
- Mix of manor houses, cottages and former industrial buildings;
- Predominance of local stone and red clay tiles;
- River Sheppey (mostly culverted) and two bridges, Waterloo Bridge and the bridge at the foot of Barrendown Lane;
- Leg Square, an urban square surrounded by interesting old buildings;
- Garston Street, a lane of 17th, 18th and 19th artisans’ houses;
- Sense of enclosure in valley bottom accentuated by tall buildings and walls;
- Looming presence of HM Prison;
- Trees on the side of the valley above The Priory and Sales House;

#### Location, topography

- Located along the valley bottom north of the town centre;
- Historic lanes stretching uphill on both sides of the river (Cowl Street, Tipcote Hill, Hill Lane, Leg Square, Barrendown Lane);
- Haphazard layout;
- Upward slopes from valley bottom;

#### Historical development

- Location of many former textile mills and dense residential area;
- Shepton expanded to the east along Lower Lane and Garston Street in the post-medieval period;
- Tipcote Hill originated as the extension of Town Street down to a river crossing;
- Draycott originated as a separate hamlet with houses spreading northward up the hill (Cowl Street);
- HM Prison established in 1625, extended and altered particularly in 19th century;
- Before the construction of Waterloo Bridge c.1830 the main river crossing points were at the bottom of the hill at Town Street and Cowl Street;
- The Batch is a modern link created in the 1970s.
Uses

- Predominantly residential with minor industrial/commercial;
- Two public houses;
- Many old mill-associated buildings converted to residential use;
- HM Prison.

Townscape and architectural character

- Haphazard historic development along valley bottom;
- Draycott: key buildings are Sales House and The Priory; rural feel at west end with view of open countryside; tunnel-effect of high walls of The Priory; historic character diluted by modern appearance of Hillmead;
- Longbridge: key buildings are The Crown, No. 22 Tipcote Hill and Nos. 2/3 Longbridge; small ‘square’ formed outside The Crown, differing scale of buildings, intrusion of Hillmead, Waterloo Bridge forms visual barrier.
- Cowl Street: key buildings are the Unitarian Chapel and the bridge to the cemetery; descends from viaduct to The Crown; historic roadside development less densely developed to the north; modern development on the west side is not of special interest (not included in conservation area);
- Lower Lane: notable for sight of the Sheppey and two of its bridges; picturesque eastward view from Barrendown Lane bridge;
- Leg Square: mix of building types and styles that is characteristic of the valley bottom as a whole; area of open space overlooked by fine architecture;
- Garston Street: historic 17th, 18th and 19th century linear development; a mix of two and three-storey buildings in a range of styles and building materials; backdrop of trees and open space; public open space at west end (site of former New Street);
- Cornhill/Town Lane: eastward incline from Leg Square, strong presence of prison building; courtyard in front of Whitstone House; linear development along Town Lane.

Local features of interest

- Gold Hill, a steep unsurfaced road to neighbouring fields;
- Paved cut-through from Tipcote Hill to Lower Lane;
- Listed summerhouse in grounds of Sales House;
- Cobbled bridge over Sheppey;
- Mounting block in Cornhill;
- Chimney of former Town Mill;
- The ‘spite wall’ adjacent to no. 22 Leg Square;

Whitstone House, Town Street

Lower Lane beside the River Sheppey
Negative features

- Areas of historic paving;
- Iron railings in Tipcote Hill;
- Location of former treadmill in HM Prison wall;
- Poor quality cement re-pointing of historic stonework;
- Loss of architectural details;
- Inappropriate alterations to historic buildings;
- Poorly maintained pavements;
- Adverse impact of new development, particularly Hillmead;
- Poor road surface in the environs of The Crown;
- Insensitive timber fences at Pike Hill (poor condition) and Hill Lane (garish coloured stain);
- Unkempt open space at west end of Lower Lane (site of former mill building);
- Poor state of repair of summerhouse at Sales House and building to east of Sales House;
- Obtrusive overhead wires especially in Garston Street;
- On-street car parking spoils the appearance of Leg Square;
- Satellite dishes spoiling historic facades especially in Garston Street;
- Visually distracting appearance of multiple garages opposite the lower end of Barrendown Lane;
- Finger footpath signs in need of renewal;
- Visual intrusion of wheelie bins upon historic streetscene;
- Rubbish awaiting collection outside Sales House and under Waterloo Bridge;
7.3 Character area 3: Waterloo Road, Princes Road and open space south of the old railway (Barren Down and the grounds of Princes Lodge)

Principal features

- Area north of town centre above the valley bottom comprising part of the town’s 19th century expansion along Waterloo Road and Princes Road;
- Public and private open space important to the town’s rural setting i.e. Barren Down and the grounds of Princes Lodge;
- Key buildings: Nos. 1/3, 5/7 and 7-19 Waterloo Road, railway viaduct;
- Scheduled tumuli on Barren Down;
- Waterloo Bridge, a 19th century bridge over the Sheppey Course of former Somerset and Dorset railway;
- Barrendown Lane footpath;
- Good southward views over the town featuring the town’s landmarks, St Peter and St Paul’s Church and the Anglo Brewery;
- Trees and tree groups within the open spaces and specimen trees in private gardens;
- Late twentieth century residential infill;

Location, topography

- North side of Shepton on rising land above the valley bottom;
- Visual barrier of embanked former railway;
- Princes Road is relatively level, following a contour.

Historical development

- Cowl Street (character area 2) was the early northern approach to the town centre, crossing at a ford;
- Turnpikes were established from the mid 18th century onwards;
- Waterloo Road and Waterloo Bridge were constructed in the 19th century and development at the southern end dates from this period;
- Princes Road and development at the northern end dates from the second half of the 19th century;
- The Great Western Railway reached the town in 1854 and the Somerset and Dorset in 1874 though neither had a major impact on existing road layout;
- Former District Hospital established in 1879 (Princes Road), former senior school opened in late 19th century, current junior school opened in 1902;

Nos 9-17 Waterloo Road, a terrace of houses circa 1830

Lodge to cemetery, 1856 by Wainwright and Heard
Uses

- Primarily residential with school and a restaurant;
- Former hospital and school building converted to residential use;
- Walking (East Mendip Way) and dog walking popular along public footpaths, especially Barren Down.

Townscape and architectural character

- Waterloo Road and Princes Road are straight and have a uniform width, an indication of their 19th century construction;
- Decline in status and size of buildings as one progresses up Waterloo Road;
- Good ensemble of mid 19th century buildings on west side of Waterloo Road including two town houses (nos. 1/3 and 5/7) and a 3-storey terrace (nos. 9-17);
- 19th century development in Princes Road set well back from road behind stone boundary wall and foliage;
- Barrendown Lane runs downhill from open country to the town;
- Large and prominent roadside tree beside no. 3 Waterloo Road, tall pines beside Princes Road junction;
- Modern infill;

Local features of interest

- Old stone in fields at Barren Down;
- Former quarry on east side of Waterloo Road;
- Stone steps to footpath;
- GR post box;
- Old iron gates at school.

Negative features

- Loss of architectural details;
- Inappropriate alterations to historic buildings;
- Visual intrusion of wheelie bins upon historic streetscene;
- Poor quality cement re-pointing of historic stonework;
-Insensitive modern infill in Waterloo Road;

7.4 Character area 4: Darshill and Bowlish

Principal features

- Concentration of listed buildings beside Forum Lane;
- Key buildings: Bowlish House, Old Bowlish House, Park House, Old Silk Mill and Lower Silk Mill;
- An area of former mill activity beside the Sheppey, though mills have been demolished;
• River Sheppey;
• Rural character (away from Wells Road);

Location, topography

• Valley setting beside the River Sheppey to the west of Shepton Mallet town centre;
• Coombe Lane and Forum Lane rise from the valley bottom;

Historical development

• Small rural settlement until industrial development in the 18th and 19th centuries;
• Wells Road constructed in mid 19th century;
• Demolition of disused mills and silting up of millpond in the 20th century.

Uses

• Residential;
• Bowlish House, a restaurant with rooms;
• Public house currently closed;
• Infant school
• Generally quiet lanes but Wells Road is part of the A371 Shepton to Wells road and has a wide carriageway with fast moving traffic;

Townscape and architectural character

• Wells Road is wide, lined with stone walls behind which are trees and greenery;
• Only four properties address this stretch of Wells Road (public house, Weirside, former Ham Mill and Old Coach House);
• Collection of good quality historic buildings stepping down Forum Lane;
• Back Lane has a rural character - is narrow and curves as it rises to meet Ham Lane;
• Ham Lane has grass verges at west end and a wide junction with Back Lane which gives a good setting to Cleevers and Old Manor House;
• Coombe Lane ascends from Bowlish House, narrow beside high stone wall of Bowlish grounds, backdrop of trees on either side, some modern infill;

Local features of interest

• Mill races, sluices, weirs and leats that drove the former mills;
• Cast iron street name sign at Forum Terrace;
• Stone kerbs in Coombe Lane.

Negative features

• Loss of architectural details;
• Inappropriate alterations to historic buildings;
• Poor quality cement re-pointing of historic stonework;
• Obtrusive garages that have an adverse impact on the streetscene;
• Visual intrusion of wheelie bins upon historic streetscene;
• Noise and speed of traffic along Wells Road;
• Horseshoe Inn public house is vacant and empty;
• Rubbish and litter in the Sheppey and beside footpaths leading from Coombe Lane;
7.5 Character area 5: Charlton and the Charlton Viaduct

Principal features

- Key buildings: The Woodlands, Brewmaster’s Buildings, former brewery and maltings, Charlton Viaduct;
- Former industrial (textiles and brewery) area now converted to trading estate;
- Mix of large industrial buildings and smaller stone cottages and houses;
- Grouping of mill, millpond, owner’s house and workers’ cottages;
- Woodlands Farmhouse, a relic of agricultural activity;
- The Thatched Cottage Inn, the only thatched roof in the conservation area;
- River Sheppey and former millponds;
- View of the viaduct and surrounding countryside;
- Tranquil atmosphere, bird song more noticeable than traffic;
- Old stone walls;
- Distinctive ‘hats’ of former maltings;
- Location of the Fosse Way;
- Trees along old railway south of the viaduct.

Location, topography

- Valley setting beside the River Sheppey on the eastern side of Shepton not far from the river’s source.

Historical development

- Fosse Way, Romano British finds;
- Woodlands Farmhouse, a 17th century building associated with agriculture;
- Former 17th century clothing mill once consisting of mill, factory, shops, dye houses, stores and racks;
- In 1844 the site was converted into a brewery, Charlton Brewery and Maltings, by Francis Berryman;
- The Somerset and Dorset railway viaduct was constructed in 1887 as a single track, later converted to double track;
- Brewery buildings vacant after the late 1950s but the present trading estate was developed in the 1980s by revitalising disused and derelict buildings, restoring ponds.

Woodlands Farmhouse, Charlton

The disused viaduct in Charlton now listed grade II*
Uses

- Offices, light industrial, residential;
- Old Thatched Cottage restaurant;

Townscape and architectural character

- Informal layout;
- In the east of the area (Brewery Lane) are large former industrial buildings up to four storeys in height;
- Landscaping, notably the ponds and weir soften the harsh appearance semi-industrial appearance of the site;
- The west of the area (Martin’s Lane) is residential and contains two storey stone cottages and houses informally arranged around well-kept gardens;

Negative features

- Loss of architectural details;
- Inappropriate alterations to historic buildings;
- Poor quality cement re-pointing of historic stonework;
- Visual intrusion of wheelie bins upon historic streetscene;
- Large green metal storage container in the yard of The Maltings is an eyesore;
- Flat-roofed 20th century building extension at west end of former brewery is out of character with the area;
- Double garage at no. 3 Brewery Lane has an adverse effect on setting.

Distinctive rooftop of converted brewery building, Charlton
PART 2 MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

8 Introduction

8.1 Structure and scope

Part 1 of this document, the *Shepton Mallet Conservation Area Appraisal*, assesses the special interest of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area. The key characteristics which make the conservation area special are summarised in Section 1.1.

The *Appraisal* also identifies negative factors and weaknesses which detract from the conservation area’s special character. These are noted in Section 7 ‘Character Areas’ and provide the basis for the list of key issues summarised in Section 1.2.

Part 2 of this document, the *Management Proposals* and accompanying Management Proposals map, presents proposals to achieve the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area’s special character, by providing a series of recommendations for future action based on the issues raised in Section 1.2 of the *Conservation Area Appraisal*.

The proposals include recommendations for enhancement and policies for the avoidance of harmful change, many of which are the responsibility of the District Council.

*Shepton Prison dates back to the seventeenth century*
The proposals are written in the awareness that in managing the District’s conservation areas the Council’s resources are limited and therefore need to be prioritised. Financial constraints on the Council mean that proposals for which it is responsible may take longer than is desirable to implement.

The structure and scope of this document is based on the suggested framework published by English Heritage in *Guidance on the management of conservation areas* (2005).

Both the Conservation Area Appraisal and the Management Proposals will be subject to monitoring and reviews on a regular basis (see Section 8.3 below).

8.2 Current policy and other guidance

This document reflects Government guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15: ‘Planning and the Historic Environment’ and satisfies the statutory requirement of section 71(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 namely: “It shall be the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.”

Current planning policies for the district, including those governing development and management of change in conservation areas, are laid out in the
Mendip District Local Plan (adopted December 2002). However, the Local Plan will be replaced in the near future by a Local Development Framework (LDF) which is part of the new planning system which has been introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The character appraisal and management proposals document will sit alongside the conservation policies contained within the new LDF and be complementary to its aims of preserving and enhancing the district’s conservation areas.

8.3 Monitoring and review

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 Local Development Framework 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;
- Publicity and advertising.

It is possible that this review could be carried out by the local community under the guidance of a heritage consultant or the District Council. 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.

Decorative iron gates in Waterloo Road
9 Management proposals

9.1 Regeneration of town centre

The Conservation Area Appraisal has identified vacant commercial premises, low economic vitality and lack of routine maintenance along Town Street and, to a lesser extent, High Street as factors which detract from the conservation area’s special interest.

This issue is currently being addressed by two initiatives: funding for repairs to the structure and external historic fabric of traditional properties, and on public realm works, through a Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) (soon to be completed) and the District Council’s Shepton Mallet Area Regeneration Programme 2007-2008 – see Section 2.3.

In order to build on the progress in regeneration already achieved through these earlier initiatives and to act as a catalyst in the further regeneration of Shepton, the Council has applied for, and received preliminary approval for, grant aid through the Heritage Lottery Fund’s (HLF) Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI).

Proposal:

• The Council will submit a full application for Heritage Lottery Fund’s (HLF) Townscape Heritage Initiative in the autumn of 2007.
• The Council will continue to create and support regeneration initiatives in the conservation area through a rolling Shepton Mallet Area Regeneration Programme.

9.2 Preservation of historic buildings

As part of the appraisal process, and as recommended by English Heritage and in PPG 15, ‘positive’ unlisted buildings have been identified and are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map. See Section 6.3 of the conservation area appraisal for further information on their selection.

Proposal:

• The Council will only grant conservation area consent for the demolition of a ‘positive building’ (as identified on the relevant townscape appraisal map) if demolition is justified against the criteria specified in PPG 15 paragraphs 3.16 – 3.19.
9.3 Negative sites and buildings—opportunities for enhancement

The Conservation Area Appraisal has identified specific ‘negative’ sites and buildings i.e. those buildings and sites which detract from the special character and appearance of the conservation area and which therefore present an opportunity for improvement and enhancement. These are (numbers in square brackets refer to the Management Proposals map):

- Town centre (part) i.e. the proposed Townscape Heritage Initiative area [OS1];
- Little Ostry site [OS2];
- Site of demolished mill building, Lower Lane [OS3];
- North end of Town Street [OS4];
- Anglo Brewery site [OS5];
- Co-op building, junction of Commercial Road and High Street [OS6];
- Rectory Road [OS7];
- Vacant area by Lower Lane/Barrendown Lane bridge [OS8];
- Regal Road [OS9]

Proposal:

- Where a building or site has been identified as having a negative effect on the conservation area, the Council will seek to enhance that building or site.
- The Council will, after further research and analysis, seek to prepare a planning and design brief for major ‘negative’ sites.

9.4 Building maintenance and repair

There are a small number of historic buildings in need of routine maintenance and repair, particularly in the town centre. In addition, three listed buildings, No. 6 Coombe Lane, the former Anglo-Bavarian Brewery and the summerhouse at Sales House (items [OS10], [OS11] and [OS12] respectively on the Management Proposals map) are in a poor state of repair. No. 6 Coombe Lane and the former Anglo Brewery are included in the Council’s Historic Buildings at Risk Register 2006.

Proposal:

- The Council will seek to monitor the condition of all historic buildings in the conservation area and will report findings and advise action, as necessary. Where the condition of a building gives cause for concern, appropriate steps will be sought to secure the future of the building, including the use of statutory powers;
- The Council will continue to operate a programme of discretionary grant aid to assist in the repair of historic buildings that appear on the Buildings at Risk Register.

No. 6 Coombe Lane, a ‘building at risk’
9.5 Control of new development

Some modern developments do not harmonise with the historic character and appearance of the conservation area. This applies to small extensions and garages as well as larger development schemes.

Proposal:

- Development proposals will be judged for their effect on the area’s character and appearance as identified in the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area Appraisal together with relevant Local Plan policies and any other material considerations.
- The Council will continue to ensure that all new development accords with policies in the Mendip District Local Plan (adopted 2002) and any other policies which supersede this in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF);
- The Council will require a Design and Access Statement in the validation of all planning applications in the conservation area.

9.6 Loss of architectural detail and minor alterations to historic buildings

Many of the unlisted, and some of the listed, buildings in the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area have been adversely affected by the replacement of original timber sash windows with uPVC or aluminium, the loss of original timber front doors, alterations to stonework and the replacement of clay pantile roofs with concrete tiles. In some cases the removal of original architectural details such as chimneys, railings and stone gate piers has spoiled the external appearance of a building and the local streetscene.

The incremental loss of original building materials and detailing continues to erode the character and appearance of the area. Breaching of stone boundary walls for parking or other purposes results in the loss of historic fabric and cumulative erodes one of the characteristic features of the conservation area.

Proposal:

- The Council will encourage restoration of architectural detail/reversal of unsympathetic alterations where there is sound evidence of the originals, especially timber windows, chimney stacks and original roof covering.
• The Council will consider preparing advisory guidance and ‘best practice’ notes that would assist in retaining the area’s prevalent historic character and appearance and promote awareness of the value and importance of the conservation area, e.g. written advice regarding (a) alterations to historic buildings, (b) development within conservation areas, (c) the use of traditional building materials, and (d) residential parking in front gardens.

9.7 Public realm issues

Whilst the town centre has been subject to enhancement schemes in the 1990s and 2005-6, the conservation area appraisal has identified street lighting, poorly maintained pavements, obtrusive overhead wires, unsightly wiring on building facades, obstructive A-boards, finger-posts in need of maintenance or renewal and high levels of on-street parking in residential areas as current issues within the public realm.

Proposal:

• The Council will seek to investigate the potential of a Public Realm Strategy based on the principles set out in English Heritage’s ‘Streets For All’ publication (2005).

9.8 Gateways and rural approaches to the conservation area

The rural setting of the conservation area is one of its distinctive features. Development which impacts in a detrimental way upon the rural approaches, immediate setting and longer views into and from the conservation area will detract from the area’s special character. Important views are identified on the townscape analysis map in the character appraisal.

Proposal:

• The Council will seek to ensure that all development respects the rural approaches to, and the setting of, the conservation area and important views within, into and from the conservation area. The Council will seek to ensure that these remain protected from inappropriate forms of development and that due regard is paid to these views in the formulation of public realm works or enhancement schemes.
9.9 Historic floorscape

Original stone kerbs and areas of historic stone paving exist on a number of streets. These are part of the special interest of the area and should be preserved.

Proposal:

- There should be a presumption against the alteration of any part of the historic floorscape. Historic paving, gratings and gulleys should be protected and repaired as necessary, using traditional techniques and materials.

9.10 Tree management guide

Whilst trees are not particularly characteristic of the town centre, individual trees do make a positive contribution to the area’s character and appearance. Groups of trees on the fringes of the conservation area, particularly in Bowlish and Darshill, are a vital part of the area’s rural atmosphere. Nearly all of these trees are in private ownership and the District Council could help to ensure their long term survival by providing guidance to owners about their care.

Proposal:

- The Council will consider preparing guidance about care and maintenance of trees in the conservation area;
- The Council will consider the need for a tree strategy for Bowlish and Darshill where there is pressure for the removal of trees to enlarge garden space.

9.11 Shopfronts

There are a number of well preserved historic shopfronts in the conservation area. However there is a real threat that these could be under pressure for ‘modernisation’ once the area begins to regenerate, resulting in the loss of one of the area’s distinctive features.

The provision of a Shopfront Guidance leaflet, which would include a full survey of the existing shopfronts, and the provision of detailed design guidance would help local business owners achieve high standards of design. This might be funded under a THI grant scheme (as some have already been funded through the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme), with grants being given to restore existing shopfronts and install more appropriate new shopfronts.

Proposal:

- The Council will consider preparing an Advertising and Shopfront Guide for Shepton Mallet;
9.12 Repointing of stonework

Most of the area’s historic buildings are constructed with natural stone. Stone boundary walls are common. The use of natural stone as a building material is a key characteristic of the conservation area.

Unfortunately, some of the stonework of old buildings and walls has been disfigured by repointing in thick lines of grey Portland cement (in place of more subtle pointing in lime mortar). Such repointing with hard cement is almost always to the detriment of the appearance of the wall or building and, eventually, will damage the stone itself.

Repointing of listed buildings will almost always require listed building consent.

Proposal:

- The Council will consider the preparation of guidance on best practice in pointing and re-pointing of stone walls for the use of residents, property owners and builders;
- The Council will consider promoting a practical workshop about the correct ways of repointing historic stonework, possibly as part of the proposed Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme.

9.13 Conservation area boundary review

As part of the character appraisal process in 2007, a thorough survey of the existing boundaries to the conservation area was undertaken. This included a desk-top assessment of the historical development of Shepton Mallet.

A number of boundary alterations were proposed and the proposals were part of a public consultation exercise that took place in the summer of 2007. Following this public consultation, Mendip Council’s Planning Board approved the following additions to the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area on Wednesday 26th September 2007:

1. Collett Park

Justification: Collett Park was opened as pleasure grounds on 20 June 1906 on land donated by John Kyte Collett who had purchased 13.5 acres from the sale of the Langhorne Estate and laid them out as a public park with an ornamental pond, shelter and bandstand, lawns, shrubberies and flower beds. As other parcels of land became available they were added to the park.

The park, allotments and leisure facilities are typical of such developments across

![Poor quality pointing of stonework (right hand side)](image)

![Entrance to Collett Park](image)
Britain during the Victorian and Edwardian period. The park is very much of its time, created to provide a recreational area where the townspeople could take exercise, relax in the open air and perambulate along the paths and planted beds.

Collett Park and the grounds of St Paul’s School and Whitstone School (the sites of Langhorne Park and Whitstone Park respectively which are also included in the conservation area) form an almost contiguous area of landscaped green open space to the south east of the town centre which is part of the 19th century historic development of the town.

2. Cannards Grave Road (east side)

Justification: Close proximity of town and country is one of the distinctive local features of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area. Land to the east of Cannard’s Grave Road forms part of a well-treed green wedge, similar to the green approach through Darshill and Bowlish, that proceeds very close to the town centre.

The addition encompasses Field House, a late 19th century house, and parkland historically associated with it, together with Field Farm, the former Field Inn and adjacent cottages (listed grade II) and Field View, a charming Victorian three-storey terrace, consisting of eight houses dated 1880 set back from the road.

The inclusion of this area will not only give protection to a major approach to the conservation area but also give some protection to the boundaries which include a continuous high stone wall to the west and park railings to the east.

The proposed addition also includes the dismantled ‘Strawberry Line’ Witham and Wells branch railway now a cycle path, lined with Wellingtonia and black pines.

3. Factory buildings and garden at Kilver Court

Justification: This triangular site bounded by Kilver Street, Kidd’s Lane and the Charlton Viaduct comprises a sloping site with the School House at the northern-most edge set back from the busy A37 and the neo-classical porch of the former brewery at the southern end.

The area contains two listed buildings, Great House at Kilver Court and The Round House dovecote which, together with the former factory, form a cohesive historic ensemble. The former crepe woollen mill, recreation grounds, gardens and mill pond became a model factory belonging to Ernest Jardine.
The Mulberry Gardens at Kilver Court have a beauty and serenity with cascading waterfalls and the original mill pond from the legacy of its industrial past. This group of industrial buildings and open space, the character of which it is desirable to preserve, is an integral part of the chain of industrial development along the River Sheppey from Charlton to Darshill.

4. Garden of St Paul’s Junior School, Paul Street

Justification: Langhorne Park and Whitstone Park were established in Shepton the 19th century. Both are now school grounds. Langhorne House, now St Paul’s School, is a handsome mid 19th century building constructed for a local family of that name. St Paul’s school grounds are formed out of the former Langhorne Park and much of the 19th century planting and layout remains. Mature tree groups emerge as a dominant feature of the open space. The wooded area of cedar, ash, holly, Wellingtonia and flowering cherry trees present a striking view appearing in glimpses from Paul Street and Park Road. The open space, trees and stone walling which now comprise the grounds of St Paul’s Junior School is bounded by the bowling green and pavilion to the east and St Michael’s RC Church to the south, together they form an area of historic interest the character of which it is desirable to preserve.

5. Whitstone School grounds, Charlton Road

Justification: The Park formerly associated with Whitstone House, its boundary walls and undulating playing fields in the grounds of Whitsone School has mature trees and shrubs, allotments, a small holding and pond, all of which...
contribute aesthetically to the town. It is already identified as an open space of visual significance and merits inclusion within the conservation area.

The many and various trees predate the 1880s map and dense rhododendron shrubs are remnants of an earlier planting scheme. The solitary 1930s house in the grounds of Whitstone School can be viewed as a neutral contribution although its landscaping is very attractive and helps to soften the plain appearance of the west elevation.

6. **The cemetery in Waterloo Road**

Justification: The late 19th cemetery contains four listed buildings and associated stone walls, gates, trees, table tombs and memorials. It is a place with an evocative melancholy character which plays an important role in the social and architectural history of Shepton Mallet.

7. **River Sheppey and Bowlish Infants School, Bowlish**

Justification: The River Sheppey is one of the defining features of the Shepton Mallet Conservation Area which forms an east-west spine along the valley bottom. The omission of this short rural length in Bowlish would be illogical given that the river on the north side of Wells Road is included. The boundary has been drawn to also include Bowlish School (1869) and the old pumping station, two buildings of historical interest.

8. **Western Court, Pike Hill**

Justification: This area is included in the conservation area primarily because of the protection that conservation area status will bring to the fine trees on the west side of Pike Hill which form part of an imposing well-treed entrance to the town as one approaches from the west.

*Nineteenth century cemetery with access from Waterloo Road*
Western Court is a red brick late 19th century building of some interest but the modern flats are only included because it would otherwise be difficult to make a well defined boundary that included the important trees.

9. **No. 31 Commercial Road**

Justification: Though extended and altered, Oak Villa, No 31 Commercial Road, is a well proportioned late 19th century stone-built town house standing in a prominent location on a corner site at the top of Rectory Road. The house, together with its front hedge, well-tended garden and boundary wall, makes a positive contribution to the historic character and appearance of the conservation area and is prominent in views of the façade of the former Anglo Brewery.

10. **Cenotaph, High Street**

Justification: The cenotaph, against a backdrop of tall trees, closes the view up High Street and is an attractive and distinctive feature of the town, currently just outside the conservation area boundary. The commemorative monument was erected in November 1920 for remembrance of the victims of the First World War and subsequently, of the Second World War. The cenotaph is listed grade II and is described as a “relatively simple First World War Memorial…has strong local ties with the town of Shepton Mallet”.

*Collett Park in the Spring*
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