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RIBCHESTER CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

Part 1 - Introduction

Purpose of the management guidance

These guidance notes are intended to assist the preservation or enhancement of Ribchester Conservation Area. They are designed for the benefit of owners of land or property, public bodies, planning officers, developers, councillors, designers and the public at large.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Ribchester Conservation Area Appraisal. The guidance builds upon the issues and recommendations identified in the Ribchester Conservation Area Appraisal and relates to specific weaknesses and threats to the conservation area's special architectural and historic interest.

The guidance does not attempt to provide comprehensive advice; it is written in the awareness that, in managing the Borough's conservation areas, 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. However, the Council will continue to encourage improvements to the conservation area in co-operation with property owners, groups and local businesses.

The planning policy context

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*” (Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

All new development within the Ribchester Conservation Area should conform to policies within the Ribble Valley Local Plan 1998 (which already seek the preservation of the special character of all conservation areas within the Borough), the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016 and the relevant PPGs, particularly PPG 15, 'Planning and the Historic Environment'.

Local planning policies for the preservation of scheduled monuments and conservation of historic parks and gardens, listed buildings and conservation areas are set out in the Ribble Valley Local Plan which was adopted in June 1998 (Policies ENV14, ENV15, ENV16, ENV17, ENV18, ENV19, ENV20, ENV21) and the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016 which was adopted on 31st March 2005 (Policies 20 and 21, supported by draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) entitled 'Landscape and Heritage').

The Ribchester Conservation Area Appraisal

The Ribchester Conservation Area Appraisal, and its accompanying townscape appraisal map, is a separate document which defines the special architectural or historic interest that warrants designation of the Ribchester Conservation Area. It provides a sound basis for development control decisions. It will help all those involved in the planning process assess whether a proposed development affecting a conservation area would, or would not, preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

Summary of the special interest

The special interest that justifies designation of the Ribchester Conservation Area derives from the following features:

- Remains of Roman fort and associated outbuildings of settlement (*vicus*), including granaries and bath house, much of which is protected by Scheduled Monument status;
- The architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, 21 of which are listed;
- Two grade I churches: Church of St Wilfred and Church of St Saviour, Stydd;
- Church of St Peter and St Paul (grade II), a 'barn church' and one of the earliest Catholic churches in Lancashire;
- Stydd Almshouses, listed grade II*;
- Narrow, closely developed streets of former handloom weavers' settlement;
- Ensemble of St Wilfrid's Church, Rectory, Museum and Churchgates;
- Handloom weaver's cottages, including two with cellar loomshops, particularly in Church Street and Water Street;
- Good examples of late 19th century terraced houses along Church Street and Blackburn Road;
- River Ribble;
- The prevalent use of local building stone;
- Stydd, a tiny rural hamlet containing two historic churches and 18th century almshouses;
- Open space in front of White Bull;
- Views of River Ribble and surrounding landscape;
- Individual trees and groups of trees.

Summary of issues

The Ribchester Conservation Area Appraisal includes a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), identified during the appraisal process. In brief, the analysis noted:

Strengths:

- Picturesque large village with substantial Roman remains;
- Ribchester Museum, a popular attraction;
- Location on the Ribble Valley Way, surrounded by open countryside;

- Ribchester is the only large village on the River Ribble;
- Historic character and appearance of core area;

Weaknesses:

- Loss of architectural detail (original windows, doors etc);
- Insensitive alteration of historic buildings spoiling the conservation area's historic character and appearance;
- The open space at the rear of the Black Bull, visible through the gap in the Blackburn Road frontage north of The Black Bull is unkempt and out of keeping with the historic character and appearance of the conservation area;

Opportunities:

- The road beside Churchgates and the Museum is in need of resurfacing;
- There is evidence of historic stone setts in the triangular space in front of The White Bull. Restoration of these historic stone setts would enhance the centre of Ribchester;
- Two historic buildings are in a poor state of repair: outbuilding at rear of no. 31 Church Street (roof) and the building adjacent to (west) Ribchester Arms;
- No. 33 Church Street is a vacant shop.

Threats:

- Continuing loss of original architectural details and use of inappropriate modern materials or details.

Summary of recommendations

The Ribchester Conservation Area Appraisal made the following recommendations:

- Conservation Area boundary review - It is recommended that a minor amendment is made to the existing conservation area boundary in the vicinity of Lower Boyce Farm in order to take account of recent development. The proposed alterations are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map.
- Review of the conservation area appraisal and management guidance every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy.

Part 2 - Guidance

External alterations

The following design guidelines are intended to discourage the continuing loss of original architectural detail which is eroding Ribchester Conservation Area's special character and appearance. Within Ribchester Conservation Area, the Council will expect all applications for extensions and alterations to Buildings of Townscape Merit, as identified in the conservation area appraisal, to be particularly carefully considered and only well detailed schemes, using the appropriate traditional materials, will be approved.

The guidance below is not exhaustive and is aimed primarily at unlisted buildings within the conservation area.

Roofs: The roof is nearly always a dominant feature of a building and the retention of its original structure, shape, pitch, cladding and ornament is important. Traditional roofing materials should be retained. New materials should match existing. When a roof is stripped it is important that as much as possible of the original covering is re-used, preferably on the visible slopes, with matching new materials on other slopes.

Slates and tiles (general): Some slates and stone slates are laid to diminishing courses. The character of such roof coverings should not be damaged by a radical change in the range of slate sizes. The pattern and coursing of different roofing materials are distinctive features and should be retained and, where necessary, restored with matching materials.

Stone roofing slates: Stone slate roofs are a fundamental part of the distinctive local character of vernacular buildings in Ribble Valley. The character of the roof is derived principally from the colour and texture of the stone slates, their size, thickness and roughness. They are often laid in courses diminishing in size from the eaves to the ridge.

Correct detailing of a roof – its pitch and the treatment of the eaves, valleys and ridges – not only creates the character of the roof but also ensures that the roof performs satisfactorily.

The use of material salvaged from other old buildings should be avoided and new stone slates used wherever possible. English Heritage have published a *Stone Slate Advice Note* which is a comprehensive guide to the conservation of stone slate roofs and covers all aspects from the production of stone slates, to advice on choosing a slater. The website of the Stone Roofing Association (www.stoneroof.org.uk) contains much useful information.

Chimney stacks and pots: Chimney stacks are both formal and functional features of the roofscape. In many cases chimneys also perform a vital structural function, and they should normally be retained, even when no longer required. If the stacks become unsafe, they should be taken down and rebuilt to the original height and design. Chimney pots can sometimes be valuable decorative features in their own right, but they are also functional features. A traditional roofscape can be damaged by their removal.

Stonework: Alterations to wall surfaces are usually the most damaging that can be made to the overall appearance of a historic building. Alterations or repairs to external elevations should respect historic fabric and match it in materials, texture, quality and colour. Stonework should not normally be rendered unless this was the original surface. It may be necessary to remove more recently applied render if this is damaging the surface beneath. A re-render in traditional materials would be appropriate if there is evidence of the original historic surface.

Stone cleaning: All stone cleaning techniques have an inherent risk of damaging the stone and must be selected and executed with care.

Cleaning may sometimes be desirable to prevent the harm caused by corrosive dirt or to reveal where problems are hidden by encrustations. However, cleaning is less justifiable for aesthetic reasons alone, and consideration must be given to its impact on the historic character of the building (e.g. loss of 'the patina of age') especially if located in a terrace.

Cleaning with water and bristle brushes is the simplest method, although water cleaning can lead to saturation of the walls.

Abrasive cleaning methods, including blasting of any kind, are likely to cause damage and should only be used where the necessary skills are available to carry out the work without harming the stonework. Techniques that use hand-held and mechanical tools with carborundum heads, rotary brushes and abrasive blocks should be considered as a resurfacing technique rather than a cleaning method.

Prior to cleaning, a sample panel(s) in an unobtrusive location should be prepared to ascertain the suitability of the technique and the effect on the fabric, character and appearance of the building.

External painting: Previously unpainted surfaces should not normally be painted over. There is rarely a good reason to paint historic stonework or brickwork. Re-painting in a different colour can be to the detriment of a building's historic character and the streetscape. Colour should not be altered unless there is historical evidence to support the proposed change. In Ribble Valley there is little or no historic precedent for bright or garishly coloured facades.

Historically, some buildings in Ribble Valley may have been limewashed, sometimes called 'whitewashed'. Limewash can be used to protect exposed rubblestone walls or to conceal rough stonework. Limewash is a simple type of matt paint made from lime and water, with or without additives. Impurities in early lime commonly produced an off-white colour, not today's startling white which is a 20th century development that is inappropriate on a historic building.

Renders: The use of an impervious Portland cement render (and/or application of an impervious paint) in place of a traditional lime-based covering restricts evaporation. On buildings pre-dating about 1800, the original render is likely to have been of ordinary (non-

hydraulic) lime or natural hydraulic lime that has a weak chemical set. After that time, the introduction of eminently hydraulic limes began a trend which culminated in the widespread use of cement. Lime-based renders provide a different aesthetic effect to cement-based renders. Although a range of finishes exists with each, the latter has a more uniform appearance, and corners and details are sharper and more defined.

Weathering characteristics also differ. Cement renders often fail in patches and detach from the wall, whereas lime renders gradually erode back in a more even manner.

On traditionally constructed buildings replacement renders should generally be a soft and porous lime render without the addition of cement. It is important that the render is applied by someone familiar with lime-based materials. A traditional limewash will normally be the most appropriate finish as the high water permeability will allow the walls to 'breathe'.

Cement based or other waterproof and hard gloss paints should not be used on surfaces covered with traditional render.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (address below) may be able to advise on suitable contractors or courses regarding lime renders.

Stucco: The original purpose of stucco, an early type of render, was to mimic stone and, if painted at all, should be close in tone to the colour of local stonework. In any case, it is important to consider any clash in colour that may occur with neighbouring properties, especially in a terrace or row of houses.

Slobbered masonry: Local traditions such as 'slobbering' i.e. the uneven rendering of a rubblestone wall surface are part of the vernacular tradition of building and should be respected and therefore not painted or removed.

Pointing: The primary feature of a wall is the building material itself and the pointing should normally be visually subservient to it. In general, pointing that speaks louder than the walling material is inappropriate. Repointing should usually be no more than a repair - a repeat of the existing mix and appearance - except where the mix is inappropriate or damaging.

Repointing of historic stone walls should be carried out using lime based mortar, which is compatible with the strength, porosity and texture of the stone and a close match to the original mortar. As a general principle, the mortar should be slightly weaker than the stone to allow the wall to 'breathe' and for moisture to evaporate through the joints and to discourage excessive moisture loss through the face of the stone – which would speed up the rate of decay.

Any change in the character of the pointing can be visually and physically damaging. Historic pointing may survive wholly or in part and this should be preserved. Mechanical

cutters should not be used to cut out old mortar because it makes the joints unacceptably wide, and may score the masonry.

Doors and doorways: Original doors should be retained. Their replacement or defacement is often entirely unnecessary. Replacement doors should copy the original in the materials, the detail of the design, and the paint finish. Modern off-the-peg doors are not generally acceptable for use in historic buildings, nor are doors with incongruous design features such as integral fanlights. Unpainted hardwood, stained or varnished softwood, or uPVC doors are rarely suitable. Doorcases, door furniture including hinges, knockers and letter-boxes, foot scrapers, fanlights, pediments, columns, pilasters, cornices, consoles and carved or stucco moulded details should not be removed or mutilated but retained even if the doorway is redundant.

Windows: Sliding sash and side-hung casements are the two principal window types. As a rule, windows in historic buildings should be repaired, or if beyond repair should be replaced 'like for like'. It is important that the design, scale and proportion of new windows should be sympathetic to the character of the building.

Glazing bars in old buildings are invariably moulded and slender. Over time, the thickness and moulding of glazing bars, the size and arrangement of panes and other historic window details varied. Care is therefore needed in the repair and replacement of historic windows to ensure works are 'honest' and not historically misleading. Details should be appropriate to the date of the building or to the date when the window aperture was made.

Seventeenth century stone mullion windows were normally glazed with leaded lights in a thin metal frame. If necessary, they should be replaced with a similar design ensuring that the stonework dominates.

Paint is usually the correct finish for timber windows; staining is not a traditional finish and should not normally be used. All old glass is of interest, whether it be stained, painted or etched glass or early plain glass such as crown glass.

Replacement windows: The insertion of factory made standard windows of all kinds, whether in timber, aluminium, galvanised steel or plastic is almost always damaging to the character and appearance of historic buildings. In particular, for reasons of strength the thickness of frame members tends to be greater in plastic or aluminium windows than in traditional timber ones. Modern casements with top-opening or louvred lights or asymmetrically spaced lights are generally unsuitable as replacements for windows in historic buildings.

Services: The poorly thought out introduction of services, such as mains electricity, telephone or gas, can be detrimental to the appearance and character of a building. Long runs of surface wiring and any external gas piping should be avoided.

Satellite dishes, meter boxes, burglar alarms, security and other floodlighting, video cameras, and central heating and other flues should be located carefully in a visually unobtrusive position away from the principal elevation.

Rainwater goods: Traditional eaves gutters were made of timber or cast-iron fixed on metal rise and fall brackets. Downpipes were normally cast-iron. Modern plastic gutters can be unsightly and out of character, especially if grey plastic is used. Traditional metal brackets are fixed directly to the stonework. Cracked or broken cast-iron rainwater goods should be replaced in matching material and section (e.g. ogee, half-round). Aluminium is preferable to uPVC.

There is a distinctive Ribble Valley feature of shaped stone brackets supporting the gutter at eaves level or, on high status properties, a moulded stone eaves cornice behind which the gutter is concealed. These local details should be preserved.

Maintenance: A key to keeping the necessary high standards in order to retain the historic appearance of the conservation area is in regular and thorough maintenance. A well-looked after building will normally retain maximum value.

Boundary treatments

Traditionally, most boundaries in the Ribchester Conservation Area are defined by stone walls, of varying heights. Sometimes, soft hedging is located behind the wall to provide greater privacy or vertical iron railings may be set on a low stone wall.

For new development in Ribchester, it is important that local materials and detailing are used and new boundaries following the historic precedent of stone will help development to fit in to its context. Modern alternatives, such as concrete blocks, ranch-style timber fencing, or post-and-rail type fencing are not acceptable. Simple, close-boarded fencing, with timber posts, may be an alternative to stone in certain locations away from the public viewpoint but such fencing should be simply detailed, without any decoration such as a curved top or trellis.

Buildings of Townscape Merit

The appraisal for Ribchester identified a number of unlisted buildings which it is considered make a *positive* contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and these are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map that accompanies the appraisal.

There is a general presumption in favour of retaining all Buildings of Townscape Merit, as set out in the Local Plan policy ENV18 and in PPG15. The Council will also consider very carefully all applications to alter or extend such buildings.

Buildings within a conservation area greater than 115 cubic metres are automatically protected from demolition as “Conservation Area Consent” is required from the Council

before any building can be removed. For Buildings of Townscape Merit, any application for demolition will need to be accompanied by a reasoned justification (similar to that required for a listed building) stating why the building should be demolished. The Council will expect the applicant to demonstrate that:

- The building is beyond economic repair
- The building has been offered on the open market
- If vacant, alternative uses have been sought

Building condition

Generally, the buildings in Ribchester are relatively well maintained. There were no obvious “Buildings at Risk” at the time of the survey (2005). The following buildings were in a poor state of repair: no. 31 Church Street (roof), and the building adjacent to (west) Ribchester Arms; No. 33 Church Street is a vacant shop.

Regular monitoring of the condition of the buildings in the conservation area is desirable. Where a listed building is threatened by a lack of maintenance or repair, the Council does have powers to force the owner to take action. These powers include Urgent Works and Repairs Notices, allowing the Council to carry out the works themselves if necessary and to recover the costs from the owner. The Council also has powers to secure the preservation of unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area by using Urgent Works notices in a similar way to listed buildings, although in this case, the Secretary of State’s permission is required. This applies where a building is important for maintaining the character and appearance of the area so all buildings which have been identified as “Buildings of Townscape Merit” in the conservation area appraisal will be eligible. The Council may carry out such works as a necessary in default and recover the costs incurred from the owners.

Some of the buildings might be assisted by an offer of grant aid - conservation area status gives the potential for external funding from English Heritage or the Heritage Lottery Fund, through a partnership grant scheme with the Council.

Trees

The preparation of a Tree Management Programme would be welcome, identifying all mature trees within the conservation area (privately as well as publicly owned) and ensuring that priorities are agreed and funding set aside for the costs involved for remedial works or replacement.

New development

There are few development opportunities within the Ribchester Conservation Area, although some improvement or enlargement of the existing buildings may be possible subject to very rigorous controls, and there may occasionally be sites where completely new development is acceptable. In the conservation area, where the quality of the general environment is already acknowledged by designation, the Council will insist on good quality schemes which respond positively to their historic setting.

Development should conform to the criteria set out in Policy G1 of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan, and other relevant policies.

The following guidance will apply to most schemes, including the creation of parking areas, extensions to existing properties and new houses or commercial buildings. It is based on central government advice, contained in PPS 1 and PPG 15, and policies contained within the Ribble Valley Local Plan.

All development, but particularly in the Ribchester Conservation Area, must respond to its immediate environment, its “context”, in terms of scale, density, form, materials and detailing. Applicants for planning permission must therefore provide a “Design Statement”, to justify the design decisions that have been made as the scheme was developed and to show how the building relates to its context.

The following are general principles which should be adopted for all development in all parts of the conservation area:

Urban grain.

The “urban grain” is the pattern of the arrangement and size of buildings and their plots. It is an important part of the character of the conservation area and should be protected. Proposals for new development must include a detailed analysis of the locality and demonstrate that there is a full appreciation of the local townscape and how it has developed, including prevailing building forms, materials and plot ratios. This is particularly important on “backland” sites where new development potential is very limited and must always be secondary in character to the more important primary buildings facing the main street.

Scale and density.

Scale is the combination of a building’s height and bulk when related to its surroundings. The scale of any development should respect surrounding development. The applicant must provide accurate elevations of the surrounding buildings, showing how the new development will relate to them.

Density is the amount of development (measured in terms of floor space or number of housing units) related to the site area it occupies. In practice, it is the combination of

density with layout, landscaping and other factors which determines the quality and “feel” of new developments. Where the proposal lies within a conservation area, a careful balance must be sought between the sensitivity of the environment and the requirements of the developer. In taking account of existing densities within the conservation area, care must be taken to ensure sites are not overdeveloped. Developments which have a detrimental effect on the character of the conservation area will be resisted. It is especially important to consider how the conservation area has developed over time and to recognise the differences in building form which can be attributed to different periods.

Height

Generally, the height of new development should match the adjoining buildings, although allowing for the inevitable variations in height and bulk which are natural to historic towns and villages.

Massing

Massing is the combination of the scale of the development, its layout and its site coverage. For larger schemes, poor massing and over-intensive development leads to the creation of over-shadowed areas, with poor quality spaces between the buildings. These create a threatening environment for pedestrians and reduce the opportunities for good quality landscaping.

Appearance, materials and detailing

The emphasis in any new development or proposed alteration must always be on the need to provide a high quality of design. Consideration of scale, density, height and massing may be used to set out the basic form of the new building(s), including roof shape, roof pitch, height, depth of plan and, most importantly, the relationship of the new buildings to existing surrounding buildings and to the street. Once this basic framework has been established and the general form and siting of the building agreed, the actual appearance of any new building may be either traditional or modern, providing some opportunities for a good designer to experiment with new materials and details. In all cases, a design statement should be submitted.

Where a more traditional approach is appropriate, the Council will expect new buildings which are designed in a traditional form within the conservation area to be detailed in a manner appropriate to the historic setting. Roofs should be pitched and covered in stone slates or natural slate. Dormers and rooflights should be avoided, unless appropriate to the building, modestly sized and away from the public viewpoint. Chimneys may sometimes be required in certain locations.

Walls will usually be stone or, less commonly, natural or painted render, depending on the situation. The inclusion of small decorative details can add interest and a sense of place but must be based on local precedent and used correctly.

Windows should be timber, painted not stained. Their design should reflect traditional local styles, usually simple side-hung casements or vertically sliding sashes. If windows are to be double glazed, then these must be carefully designed. Avoidance of glazing bars can assist in achieving a satisfactory solution. Consideration should be given to alternative ways of complying with Building Regulations if traditional windows are to be used. Modern top-hung lights and modern materials, such as uPVC or aluminium, are generally unacceptable in a conservation area, particularly where the new building abuts a listed building or faces a principal street. Front doors should also be painted timber, again reflecting local historic styles.

Key design principles:

All new development should seek to:

- Achieve continuity in street frontage building lines set on the back edge of the pavement;
- Maintain the historic pattern of development by respecting the historic grain associated with historic plots and the historic morphology of development in the immediate area;
- Complement the human scale, height and massing of historic development in the immediate streetscape and the wider conservation area;
- Reflect the proportion of solid to void found in the elevations of traditional buildings and employ robust detailing, avoiding fussy or gimmicky use of applied features or detailing;
- Respect the historic hierarchy of development and detailing between principal and secondary street frontages and within plots between frontage and rear elevations;
- Conceal any parking or servicing areas behind built frontages of appropriate scale;
- Reinforce local identity by the use of the traditional materials used in the conservation area;
- Re-use traditional buildings which contribute to townscape quality.

Part 3 - Useful information

Addresses

For information on listed buildings and conservation areas in Ribble Valley:

Design and Conservation Officer
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe
Lancashire BB7 2RA
Tel: 01200 414513

For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas:

English Heritage
23 Savile Row
London W1X 1AB
General enquiries: 020 7973 3000
Customer Services: 020 7973 4916

For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
37 Spital Square
London E1 6DY
Tel: 020 7377 1644

The Georgian Group
6 Fitzroy Square
London W1T 5DX
Tel: 020 75298920

The Victorian Society,
1 Priory Gardens,
Bedford Park,
London W4 1TT
Telephone: 020 8994 1019

The Twentieth Century Society
70 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6EJ

Where to find out more

Clitheroe Library,
Church Street,
Clitheroe
BB7 2DG.
Tel: 01200 428788

Clitheroe library covers the whole of the Ribble valley with particular emphasis on Clitheroe and includes a considerable amount of material on places formerly in Yorkshire. It includes a large collection of books, a large collection of photographs of the Ribble valley, a comprehensive collection of current and retrospective maps and a significant amount of printed material from other sources.

Lancashire County Archaeological Service
Environment Directorate
PO Box 9
Guild House
Cross Street
PRESTON
PR1 8RD Tel: (01772) 533404

Lancashire County Council maintains a register of archaeological and historic sites, structures and findspots known as the Lancashire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The SMR is based in the Environment Directorate and is available for consultation by arrangement.

Website: www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/archaeologyandheritage

<http://mario.lancashire.gov.uk> is the website of MARIO (Maps & Related Information Online), an interactive map which allows you to go to anywhere in Lancashire and view information held by the Council including old maps and aerial photographs.

www.imagesofengland.org.uk aims to create a 'point in time' photographic record of England's listed buildings.

www.old-maps.co.uk is a source of online early Ordnance Survey maps.