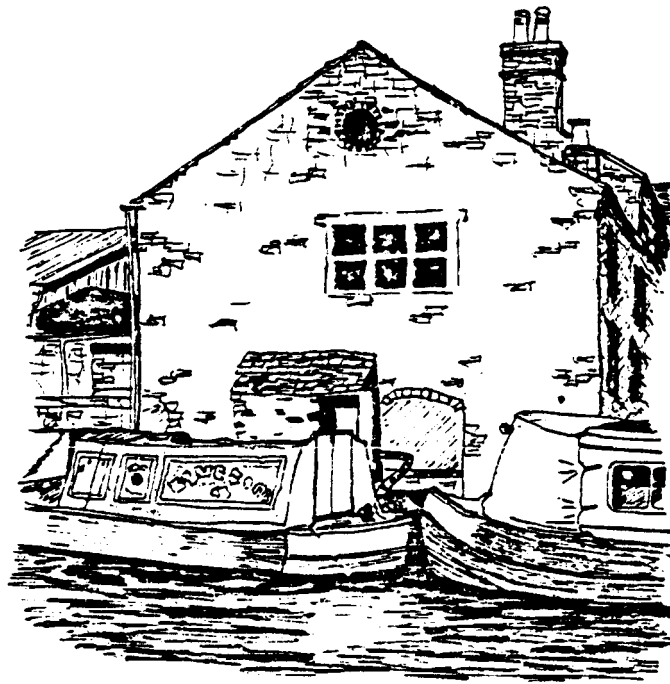


STONE CONSERVATION AREA



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Riverside
Stafford
ST16 3AQ**

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Price £1.50

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The folded plan at the rear of this document defines the Conservation Area boundary and indicates significant buildings and features.

1 INTRODUCTION

Section 2 of this document indicates the purpose of and reasons for designation of the enlarged Conservation Area for Stone. A detailed description is given of the more important architectural and historic features. The folded plan at the rear of this document defines the Conservation Area boundary and indicates significant buildings and features.

Section 3 of this document seeks and encourages the co-operation of local landowners, individuals and groups, to bring about improvements and enhancements to the Conservation Area. Suggestions are made on how these can be achieved.

Appendix 1 contains detailed guidance on maintenance and improvement of existing buildings, design of new buildings and landscaping. Appendix 2 contains additional advice including advice on the need for planning consent and details of other relevant publications.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Stone Town Centre Local Plan. The Local Plan puts forward Policies and Proposals within a broad strategy, the main aim of which, is to safeguard and enhance the character of the town centre whilst promoting its viability and allowing for its efficient functioning as a commercial centre. The Local Plan places particular emphasis on the need to improve the town centre fabric.

The Purpose of Designation

A Conservation Area is defined by Section 277 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 as an area 'of architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' There are a variety of Conservation Areas in the County ranging from historic town and village centres to stately homes and their parklands, or sites of industrial archaeological interest. The designation of Stone in 1967 as the first Conservation Area in Staffordshire indicated the architectural and historic importance of the town. The Stone Town Centre Local Plan now proposes an enlargement of the Conservation Area to include the Trent and Mersey Canal and associated buildings.

Stone is an attractive small market town on a once important coaching route from London to Chester with an interesting historic centre and strong connections with the Trent and Mersey Canal. There are several notable historic buildings, some of which are listed as being of architectural or historic interest.

Since designation of the original Conservation Area the town has experienced some redevelopment. However, it strongly retains its historic identity as a small canal side market town.

The boundaries of the Conservation Area have been revised both to reflect past change, and to incorporate the Trent and Mersey Canal and its setting which are so important a part of the history of the town.

The Meaning of Designation

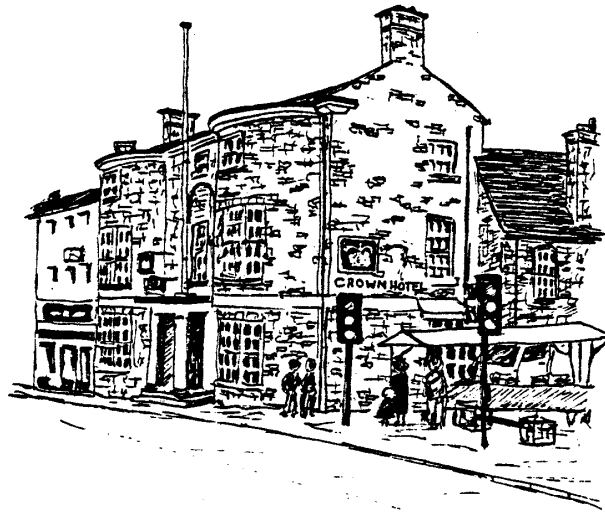
The aim of designation is to draw to the attention of the public the architectural and historic importance of an area. It emphasises the need for the design of any new development either within or adjoining the area, to be sympathetic to its existing character (see the guidance in Appendix 1 at the rear of this document). Local Authorities have certain additional powers of control of development in Conservation Areas. Conservation Area consent is required for demolition of most buildings and structures, and written notice must be given to the Local Authority of intentions to lop, top or fell trees (with certain exceptions). More detailed advice on the need for consent is given in Appendix 2.

2 CONSERVATION AREA DESCRIPTION

Stone is a small market town situated in the valley of the Trent midway between the Potteries and Stafford. Its origins are probably attributable to the Augustinian Priory established in the 10th Century. However, its development was subsequently associated with respectively the coaching route, the canal and the railway. The modern town retains a lively and unspoiled character although it has experienced many changes throughout its development.

The boundary of the Conservation Area includes the historically important Trent and Mersey Canal, the old workhouse now known as Trent Hospital, St. Michael's Church and remains of the Priory, the main shopping area in the High Street and St. Dominic's Convent.

In the 17th and 18th centuries the town served as an important resting place along the London to Chester highway. To accommodate the traveller many inns were established in the High Street. The most important was the Crown Hotel, now listed as a building of historical and architectural importance. It was built in 1780 to the design of Henry Holland and bears a plaque acknowledging the architect and its importance as a coaching inn and posting house. It is an imposing three storey double fronted red brick building with two large bow windows either side of a central porch. In the 18th century the mail was collected from a letter box provided in one of the bays. From here the mail was distributed to Holyhead, Lancaster and Stockport.



The Trent and Mersey, or the Grand Trunk Canal, was opened to link the navigable River Trent to the Bridgewater Canal at Preston Brook and hence the River Mersey. This provided the means of transporting goods and merchandise required by Josiah Wedgwood and his developing pottery industry. The "Grand Trunk" was to form the main line of a system of canals which would link the ports of Liverpool, Hull and Bristol to a major part of the country. The southern part of the canal was built first and reached Stone in 1771. From then onwards the town grew and prospered as an important commercial centre on the new canal. When it was finally completed and operational the Trent and Mersey Navigation Company located their headquarters at Stone indicating its important mid-point location in the developing canal network.

Several years later a traveller remarked "the market town of Stone from a poor insignificant place is now grown neat and handsome in its buildings, and, from its wharfs and busy traffic, wears the lively aspect of a little sea-port". This observation aptly illustrates the changes from a coaching halt to a busy developing town.

Evidence of increased development along the canal is still apparent today. However, certain buildings have been removed and others neglected and abandoned. One of the most important wharfs, the Grand Trunk Wharf, opposite Trent Hospital is still in use for boat repairs.



To the south of the Stafford Road Bridge the large warehouse on the northern bank serves as a reminder of the past activities in the area. The large brick warehouse with its double gables and boat entrance to assist the loading and unloading of barges is now redundant. However, it was once a busy and important wharf where the loading and unloading of cargoes was operated unceasingly. The covered boat entrance in the original warehouse was probably the first of its kind in the country and enabled perishable goods to be unloaded under cover. The headquarters of the Navigation Company were opposite the wharf in Westbridge House which has since been demolished.

Although the importance of the canal as a freight carrier declined after the railway was opened, the advantages of water transport were not totally abandoned by the local businessmen. In 1881, Joules, one of the local brewers decided to build their fine ale stores with waterside loading bays close to the Grand Trunk wharf. The buildings stretched along the cut enhancing the setting with their five gables and intricate tile patterns on the roof. Fortunately, although the brewery has closed the buildings are still in productive use.



Before the canal, the trading and manufacturing pattern of the town was limited to serving the local community. At the end of the 18th Century, Francis Joule, advertised for a maltster and his business started to develop. This was not the only brewing concern and there is evidence of former malthouses around the town including one at Stafford Wharf and in Crown Street.

The boot and shoe industry developed in the town during the 19th Century. In an 1818 trade directory half of the inhabitants listed in trade were associated with the shoe trade. Much of the work was undertaken at home but buildings were erected to accommodate the workshops later in the century. Buildings to the north of High Street and in Lichfield Street were associated with this trade.

In the north-west the Conservation Area boundary had been drawn to include St. Dominic's Covenant. Built in 1863 to the design of the Charles Hansom, the ashlar church and Gothic style, multi-gabled, red brick nunnery dominate this part of the town. In the grounds is a simple chapel of red brick with stone dressings by the architect A. W. Pugin, who is famous for the Houses of Parliament and St. Giles, Cheadle. The religious community on this site was one of the first to be established during the Roman Catholic revival of the late 18th and 19th centuries. Mother Margaret Hallaham started the community after whom the street in which the convent is located is named.

The main hub of activity is along the High Street with its many groups of buildings. In the past High Street was shorter, extending only from the top of the present Stafford Street to the Crown Hotel, and was known as Market Street. Market Place now occupies the area where the road originally turned south to join Crown Street. This area was altered in the 19th century and the existing road pattern developed.

There is a predominance of red brick with clay tiles although stucco, slate and sandstone are in evidence. This gives variety of colour and texture and contributes to the interest in the built environment. The enclosed vistas along the High Street are produced by the two and three storey buildings lining the winding road.

At the west end of High Street is Granville Square where the Town pump was originally located. The Square is an important focal point in the Conservation Area. The Square contains a war memorial and large plane tree which is a particularly attractive focal feature.

On the south side of the square is the timber framed Crown and Anchor public house. A replacement thatched roof has improved the appearance of this property and its contribution to the visual amenity of the Square.

A number of the properties in High Street are listed as being of architectural and historic interest. They are mainly of late 18th Century date and include the former Joule's Brewery Office which now forms part of a modern retail development.



The properties fronting onto High Street have long, narrow plots extending to the rear leading to back lanes. These plots remain from a medieval layout of burghage tenements and are evident today as long alley ways leading to Crown Street and rear access ways to the north of High Street.

Lichfield Street at the eastern end of High Street has a number of attractive buildings including The Priory and The Mansion House. The former presents a mid 19th century facade to an earlier building which embodies fragments of the Augustinian priory. The latter is of 18th century origin and has an elaborate cast iron balustrade. At the rear is a wing which was formerly a leather works.

The parish church of St. Michael's set in a wide open space surrounded by a brick wall with stone copings enhances the area. It is dated 1758 and includes the Mausoleum of Admiral Earl St. Vincent and the tomb of William Crompton in the churchyard.



Over the Workhouse Bridge the Trent Hospital stands a short distance from the main part of the town. This was once the workhouse, built in 1793 to replace a smaller thatched building. Architecturally it is an important building and contributes to the fine view of the town when seen across the meadows. The north and south blocks were added in the 19th century by local architects. The result is an attractive group of red brick buildings with stone dressings which are worthy of retention and continued use.

3. CONSERVATION IN STONE
A CHALLENGE



HOW CAN YOU HELP ?



The enlarged Conservation Area provides opportunities for positive action.

- Could your property benefit from sympathetic renovation?
- Have you had a look at your backyard recently? It could benefit from improvement



Stone is a thriving market town and a historic settlement with many attractive old buildings.

But many buildings and adjoining areas badly need improvement.

This will increase the enjoyment of the town centre for local people and attract more shoppers and visitors an increase in business?

Big changes are proposed for Stone. The Stone Town Centre Local Plan proposes new roads and pedestrianisation of High Street and adjoining streets.

There are large potential benefits to individual landowners.

Many backyards are rundown. New roads will open them up to view and allow their potential to be fully realised.

How can you help? - a recipe for action:-

- improve the appearance of your property by sympathetic renovation;
- renovate and extend existing outbuildings at the rear of your property;
- create attractive pedestrian routes and courtyards directly off High Street and other streets;
- provide additional shop windows and new small shop units and offices along these routes;
- convert upper floors to flats;
- provide convenient rear servicing avoiding congested High Street and facilitating pedestrianisation;
- co-operate with your neighbours in joint schemes for backyards;
- remove unsightly signs;
- remove unsightly fences and other structures;

Some owners have already taken on the challenge:-

Before.....



....After

Does your property adjoin the canal ?



In the past, this may have been your forgotten boundary.

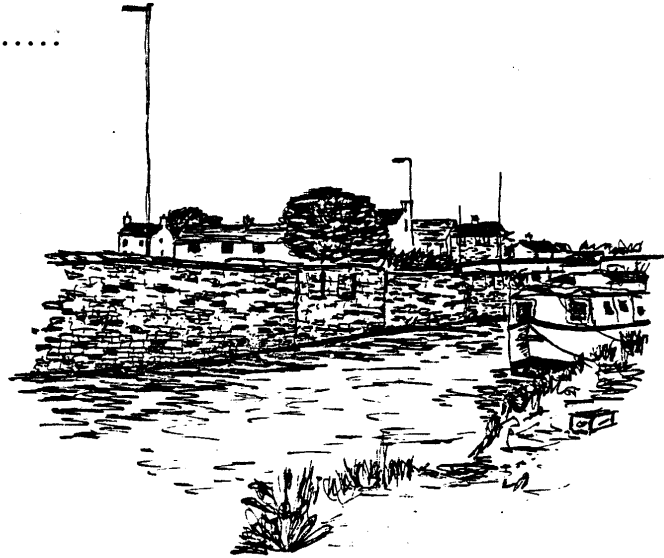
The canal is a great asset to Stone. It is a valuable resource for the enjoyment of local people and visitors.

But there are many unsightly areas which need improving.

How can you help? :-

- tidy up and landscape your boundary;
- plant trees and shrubs;
- remove, replace or repair unsightly fences and walls;
- renovate existing buildings;
- replace or hide unsightly materials e.g. asbestos, corrugated iron and exposed blockwork.

This unsightly area



..... could look like this

DESIGN GUIDANCE

Appendix 1 includes detailed design guidance contained in the Town Centre Local Plan relating to the following:-

1. Maintenance and improvement of existing buildings.
2. Design of new buildings.
3. Landscaping.

The Borough Council will encourage high standards of design based on these criteria. Planning applications will be considered on the basis of these criteria.

The value of engaging an architect or designer who has a creative approach to design in a Conservation Area cannot be emphasised too strongly.

ADDITIONAL ADVICE

Appendix 2 gives further information on the need for planning consent, availability of grant aid and on other provisions of the legislation.

Addresses and telephone numbers are given of where to obtain further advice or discuss any queries with Planning Officers.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

1. MAINTENANCE AND RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS

- 1.1 The Stone Town Centre Local Plan places great emphasis on the rehabilitation/conversion of existing buildings within the town centre.
- 1.2 Existing buildings should be maintained in a good state of repair. Where appropriate existing brickwork, rendering, stonework and architectural details e.g. at verges, window and door surrounds should be cleaned and made good. Defective windows and doors should be repaired, such repair to be in keeping with the building concerned.
- 1.3 Defective roofs should be made good including the replacement of tiles and slates, renewal of flashings and repair of detailing to ridges and chimney stacks.
- 1.4 The Borough Council are particularly anxious to encourage high standards of maintenance in respect of listed buildings. the legislation places the onus on the owner to maintain and safeguard listed buildings. This applies to both external and internal features.
- 1.5 Early shop fronts should be retained and made good where necessary.
- 1.6 In most cases consent is required for demolition of buildings in the Conservation Area. Consent will not normally be granted unless the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the building concerned is not of any merit, and is incapable of being used for any suitable purpose. Furthermore, consent will not be granted prior to approval of firm, detailed and acceptable plans for redevelopment.

2. NEW BUILDINGS

- 2.1 Where demand for additional floorspace cannot be met wholly by conversion of existing buildings, new buildings and extensions to buildings may be allowed and the Borough Council will encourage high standards of design based on the following criteria:-
- 2.2 Buildings should be of pleasing appearance and look as if they belong in their setting.
- 2.3 Buildings should reflect the character of the town centre by drawing from the character of existing buildings in terms of scale, materials, form and detailing.
- 2.5 Buildings should exploit existing features (e.g. in terms of their relationship to pedestrian areas and the canal).
- 2.5 Buildings should emphasise existing views (buildings can provide a frame for and lead the eye towards points of interest in the townscape).

- 2.6 The continuity of existing frontage facades should be maintained.
- 2.7 Buildings should be 2-3 storeys high with steeply pitched roofs.
- 2.8 Building materials should be of types traditional to this part of Staffordshire including:-
 - (a) red/brown bricks;
 - (b) rendered walls (white or similar);
 - (c) blue-black plain (and/or decorated) tiles or slates. Roofing materials should generally be darker in tone than walls.
- 2.9 Where appropriate advantage should be taken of secondhand bricks, tiles and slates.
- 2.10 The number of different materials should be minimised to avoid visual confusion.
- 2.11 Roof lines should be carefully designed to preserve skylines.
- 2.12 Architectural detailing for instance traditional eaves detailing should be used in a sensitive manner to improve the appearance of buildings in their particular context and should reinforce the character of the town centre.
- 2.13 Window size and form should reflect existing premises. Buildings in the Conservation Area generally are characterised by a repetition of vertical elements (e.g. upright windows). Elliptical or soldier course heads to doors and windows are often appropriate.
- 2.14 Shop fascias should pay respect to the particular buildings in which they are located. The present variety of shop fronts should be maintained and early shop fronts retained where possible.

3. EXISTING PLANTING

- 3.1 Existing planting where it contributes to the setting of the Conservation Area and individual buildings should be retained and properly maintained including the replacement of any failures.
- 3.2 The consent of the Borough Council is required for the topping, lopping or felling of trees the subject of a Tree Preservation Order. The Borough Council must be given six weeks notice of any works to a tree within the Conservation Area.

4. FRESH PLANTING

- 4.1 Many parts of the Conservation Area are devoid of planting. More planting in appropriate locations would greatly improve the Conservation Area setting.
- 4.2 Existing trees and shrubs should be retained as part of new development.
- 4.3 New planting should:-
 - (a) compliment individual buildings and groups of buildings;

- (b) help create a feeling of enclosure;
 - (c) hide unsightly features;
 - (d) give shade in summer and shelter in winter.
- 4.4 Tree shapes and colours should compliment and harmonise with buildings.
- 4.5 New planting should take account of site conditions such as type and quality of soil, drainage, degree of exposure, relationship to buildings and hard surfaces, changes in levels.
- 4.6 Trees should be positioned so they can grow naturally throughout their lives. They should not need to be removed or unsympathetically pruned later on because of interference with buildings, property or services.
- 4.7 Within the spread of existing trees excavation of services should be by hand digging only.
- 4.8 Levels should not be raised or lowered in the immediate vicinity of trees. Paving should not be taken right up to the bases of trees.
- 4.9 Advantage should be taken of larger specimen trees e.g. extra large standard trees (14' - 20' or larger) in order to create an earlier impression of maturity. Such trees are sturdier, have higher branches and are more resistant to vandalism than smaller specimens.
- 4.10 Planting should be carried out alongside highways to screen unsightly features.
- 4.11 Wherever possible early planting prior to construction work in areas well away from disturbance should be considered in order to give an early sense of maturity.
- 4.12 In order to ensure continuity of effect group planting should comprise quicker growing species interplanted with slower growing varieties. The former can then be removed when they reach maturity leaving the slower growing more permanent planting.
- 4.13 Use should be made of shrub planting boxes particularly in pedestrian areas. Planting boxes should be in keeping with their surroundings in terms of design and colour and type of materials.
- 4.14 In order to be effective new planting requires ongoing maintenance including regular weeding, watering and replacement of failures.
- 4.15 More detailed advice on planting is given in the Borough Council's approved Development Control Policy document, "Trees and Landscaping" available from the Borough Planning Department.

5. PAVING TREATMENT

- 5.1 Paving treatment should make use of different materials to create interest and relieve monotony. Paving should include cobbles, granite setts, brick paviers and stone flags. Areas of unbroken tarmac and concrete should be avoided.

- 5.2 Some areas of traditional paving survive and where possible these should be retained.
- 5.3 Individual car parking bays should be delineated by different types of paving and groups of bays should be separated by planting beds and shrub boxes.

6. WALLS AND FENCES

- 6.1 Walls and fences, as well as screening unsightly features, can contribute towards the visual enclosure of townscape spaces and can compliment buildings and underpin views.
- 6.2 Where appropriate existing walls and fences should be retained. Walls and fences should be in keeping with the surroundings in terms of design and materials. New walls should utilize red/brown bricks or stone. Copings should be darker than brickwork.

7. STREET FURNITURE

- 7.1 Street furniture (e.g. seats and litter bins) should be in keeping with the surroundings in terms of design and materials.
- 7.2 Poles and wires should be kept to an absolute minimum and unnecessary poles and signs should be removed to reduce visual clutter.

8. UNTIDY SITES

- 8.1 Untidy sites particularly at the rear of premises and adjoining the canal should be improved by the removal of eyesores (e.g. decrepit and unsightly outbuildings and redundant structures) and appropriate planting and paving treatment. Consent will normally be required for the demolition of buildings in the Conservation Area.

9. ADVERTISEMENTS

- 9.1 Advertisements should be appropriate to their setting and the properties on which they are located.
- 9.2 The Borough Council's approved Development Control Policy "Advertisements" contains detailed advice on the type of advertisements likely to be acceptable. Copies are available from the Borough Planning Department.

3.2 The County Council has a nursery of trees some of which may be made available for enhancing the appearance of the Conservation Area.

4. FURTHER ADVICE

4.1 Contact the Borough Planning Department, Civic Offices, Riverside, Stafford (telephone (0785) 223181) in the first instance, if you require any further advice.

4.2 copies of the following documents can be viewed at or purchased from the Borough Planning Department:-

Stone Town Centre Local Plan

Stafford Borough Council Development Control Policies:-

Advertisements
Trees and Landscaping
Parking and Servicing
Space About Dwellings
Extensions to Dwellings
Industrial and Commercial Development

4.3 Free booklets on the need for planning consent and on application procedures are available from the Borough Planning Department