



Great Comberton Village Design Statement

June 2013



1 Purpose

This Village Design Statement (VDS) describes the character of Great Comberton through the eyes of its inhabitants and sets out the features and qualities that are valued by them. It does not consider whether development is desirable but is intended to act as guidance for residents, architects, builders; and Wychavon District Council in considering planning applications. It is also hoped that everyone living in the village will wish to play a part in protecting and strengthening the features that make Great Comberton such a beautiful place.

2 Process

The initial idea for a VDS came from the Parish Council after discussion with Wychavon District Council. Because a VDS represents the views of the whole village it carries a degree of weight in planning matters once adopted by Wychavon as a Local Information Source; and a preliminary meeting was therefore called to assess opinion. This was attended by 9 villagers and it was decided to proceed. The next meeting was advertised in the parish magazine and on the village notice board. Following a discussion of the form the VDS should take, a walkabout in groups was carried out to identify the characteristics considered important. The views expressed were compiled into the first draft of this document together with some background information, and this was modified slightly at a third meeting. The second draft was discussed with officers at Wychavon District Council, and circulated to every household in the village with an invitation to comment. This third draft incorporates those comments received and approved at a fourth meeting.

3 The Village

Great Comberton is a small village lying on a gently sloping river terrace at the foot of Bredon Hill, above the River Avon in Worcestershire. The parish stretches from the summit of Bredon Hill to the Avon and covers 965 acres (390 hectares) of grassland and arable farmland on a calcareous clay loam. This area was inhabited from prehistoric times, with Iron Age and Roman remains locally. The origins of the village are likely to be between the 7th and 9th century AD, a period when scattered and ephemeral farmsteads were coalescing into compact villages surrounded by open fields laid out in strips and farmed communally under a feudal lord. This type of landscape, often described as Champion, was characteristic of a band of land broadly from Dorset to the Wash, contrasting with the scattered settlement and older enclosure to the north-west and south-east. In 972 King Edgar's Charter describes the boundaries of Pershore Abbey lands and these include Cumbrincgtune, which consisted of ten manses. The village appears in Domesday Book but we cannot deduce either the area of the parish or the population from the information it lists. The earliest mention of the church is in 1268 but the structure seems to have been almost completely rebuilt in the 14th century. The churchyard contains an enormous English yew which is probably over 700 years old.

The first clear map of the village dates from 1809, when the Hanfords of Woollas Hall were lords of the manor. It shows five open arable fields, areas of meadow, small enclosed fields immediately around the village, and waste, or rough grazing, on the hill. In 1820 all this was swept away and the land was parcelled up and allocated to those that held strips in the open fields. Where arable land was put to grass the form of the strips is preserved as ridge and furrow. Pear trees were prominent in the 1800s with the perry said to be famous beyond the neighbourhood. With the establishments of tenants' rights in 1872 orchards proliferated, as shown on the earliest Ordnance Survey maps and a few still survive today.

From 1831 to 1931 the population remained relatively stable at around 200 living in between 50 and 58 dwellings. Since then some of the old cottages have been demolished and piecemeal infill and replacement houses in varying styles and materials have been constructed. In 1950 the first phase of an estate of 39 houses and bungalows was built at Hands Orchard. Today there are 124 dwellings with a population of about 300.



The Conservation Area, designated Settlement Boundary, Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Protected Open Space are shown on the map with Listed Buildings set out afterwards at the end of this document. The Quay on the River Avon is owned by the Parish Council and registered as a Village Green.

4 Setting

The setting of the village is notable for its relationship with Bredon Hill and the River Avon and for the way in which small fields are part of the structure of the village core. The 1820 Inclosure landscape of the parish is largely intact although some hedges and walls have been lost, and the overall village boundaries have been unchanged for at least 400 years. There are only two places with houses outside the village boundary, at Lilworth Farm and Westfield Cottages, dating originally from the late 19th / early 20th century.

5 Architecture

The oldest surviving houses in the village are timber-framed, some as early as the 15th century but mostly 17th century. There are 18, of which 13 are thatched. The pitch of the roofs and documentary evidence suggests that some, at least, of the others may have been thatched but are now tiled. The majority of other houses, 87 in number, are built in brick, with the older ones in a soft red or a buff/red brindle. Twentieth century bricks are yellow, cream or brown as well as red and a significant number of brick houses are painted, usually a pale cream. Fourteen houses are rendered, four are covered in wooden boards and one is of stone, although this is likely to be an 18th century facing over an older core. Roof materials are plain clay tiles on 37 houses, concrete tiles on 73 houses, some imitating plain clay tiles and others interlocking concrete tiles. Thirteen houses are thatched and one has a slate roof. Roof pitches are mostly steep, at or about 45 degrees. Some houses are of more than one material and they have been counted as the material that dominates visually. A limited amount of Cotswold stone exists in the village, in the church, plinths and chimneys of timber frame and brick dwellings and a few old garden walls.

Hedges on front boundary conceal parked cars, informal verges, footpath set back.

The majority of houses are set back from the road behind hedges or brick walls within their own garden and this is a strong characteristic of the village, helping to unify the varied styles and age of buildings and hide



parked cars. Hands Orchard stands out as an exception. Although only about 35 out of 134 houses in the village predate the 20th century the older houses tend to be more prominent, and this, combined with the irregular road pattern, gives the overall impression of an old settlement. Great Comberton has no shop, pub or school and thus is unclassified by Wychavon District Council which limits the scope for development. The absence of proposed development sites in the South Worcestershire Development Plan was strongly supported by the community.

6 Roads

The road pattern in the parish is virtually unchanged from its historic layout. Various minor changes occurred at about the time of Inclosure in 1820. The Old Quay, which lay behind Water's Edge, was abandoned and a new one established with access along Quay Lane. Previously, today's quay was known as Plumbden Common and was reached via a track from close to the village notice board. Also, a route from the war memorial to the present golf course entrance was closed. Russell Street was, at one time, a main route into the village, and the footpath to Nafford was another. In 1961 iron fences replaced hedges on the sharp bends in an attempt to improve visibility.

The introduction of a 30mph speed limit in 1999 has done little to control speeding in the village which is at its worst when Eckington Bridge is closed and the road through the village acts as a diversion route. The lack of visibility and sharp bends at the west end of the village serve to limit speeding there to some extent, but past the entrance to Hands Orchard speeds reach a peak.

7 Feedback



Likes

- Setting of village in relation to Bredon Hill and River Avon.
- Survival of original village footprint.
- Views between houses of Bredon Hill and the Malverns.
- View of church across Brailles Orchard and iron fence to field boundary.
- Open fields within village structure.
- Spacious plots around houses.
- Irregular layout of houses.
- Irregular road widths and alignment with no kerbs.
- Footpath network - access to Bredon Hill and River Avon.
- Mixture of tall and clipped hedges.
- Hedges and walls on edge of road.
- Rural verges with wildflowers.
- Wildflower conservation areas and yews in churchyard.
- Large species of trees within the village.
- Informal footpath with grass strip between road and path helping to cover concrete kerbs.
- Absence of street lighting so stars can be seen at night.
- Soft red brick and lime mortar.

View of the church across Brailles Orchard

Dislikes

Overhead electric and telephone wires.
Proliferation of road signs, at village entrances in particular.
Light spillage from security lights.
Wooden fences on road frontages.
Concrete kerbs.
Plastic bollards.
Overgrown leylandii hedges.
Speeding traffic particularly when Eckington bridge is closed (see Section 9).



Thoughtless drivers damage verges without protection: overlarge vehicles use the road when Eckington Bridge is closed.

8 Guidelines

Fields within village (eg Brailles Orchard) should be protected.

Open spaces between houses should be retained, and overdevelopment of plots where the size of the house is out of proportion to the garden should be avoided.

The character of village entrances should be protected and should avoid urban features.

Mature trees should be retained where possible or replaced. In general large growing species (other than leylandii and variants) are preferred to smaller ones where there is space.

Alterations to buildings should respect the original or aim to improve its contribution to the village scene.

The use of a soft red brick, plain clay roof tiles and oak framing are welcome forms of construction.

High quality modern design should not be ruled out.

New buildings should be set back behind hedges or walls of traditional construction and materials.

Each dwelling should include sufficient off-street parking screened from the road.

The use of permeable materials such as reinforced grass or gravel for parking is encouraged as this reduces runoff and gives a softer appearance.

Security lighting should be directed to avoid intrusion to neighbours and light spillage into the street.

Television aerials and satellite dishes should be sited unobtrusively.

Replacement kerbs should be granite setts.



Leylandii and unnecessary white lines on footpath crossing disliked. Large broadleaved trees, hedges and walls enhance the scene.

Footpaths should remain irregular with grass edging.

No increase in kerbs, signs, road markings, street furniture and lighting.

Development should only be permitted within the settlement boundary and where it is considered to preserve and enhance the Conservation Area and the village as a whole. Development within the AONB must conserve and enhance the character, appearance and special qualities of the landscape. Extensions to houses should maintain their character or improve their appearance.

9 Possible Improvements

Reduction or amalgamation of road signs.

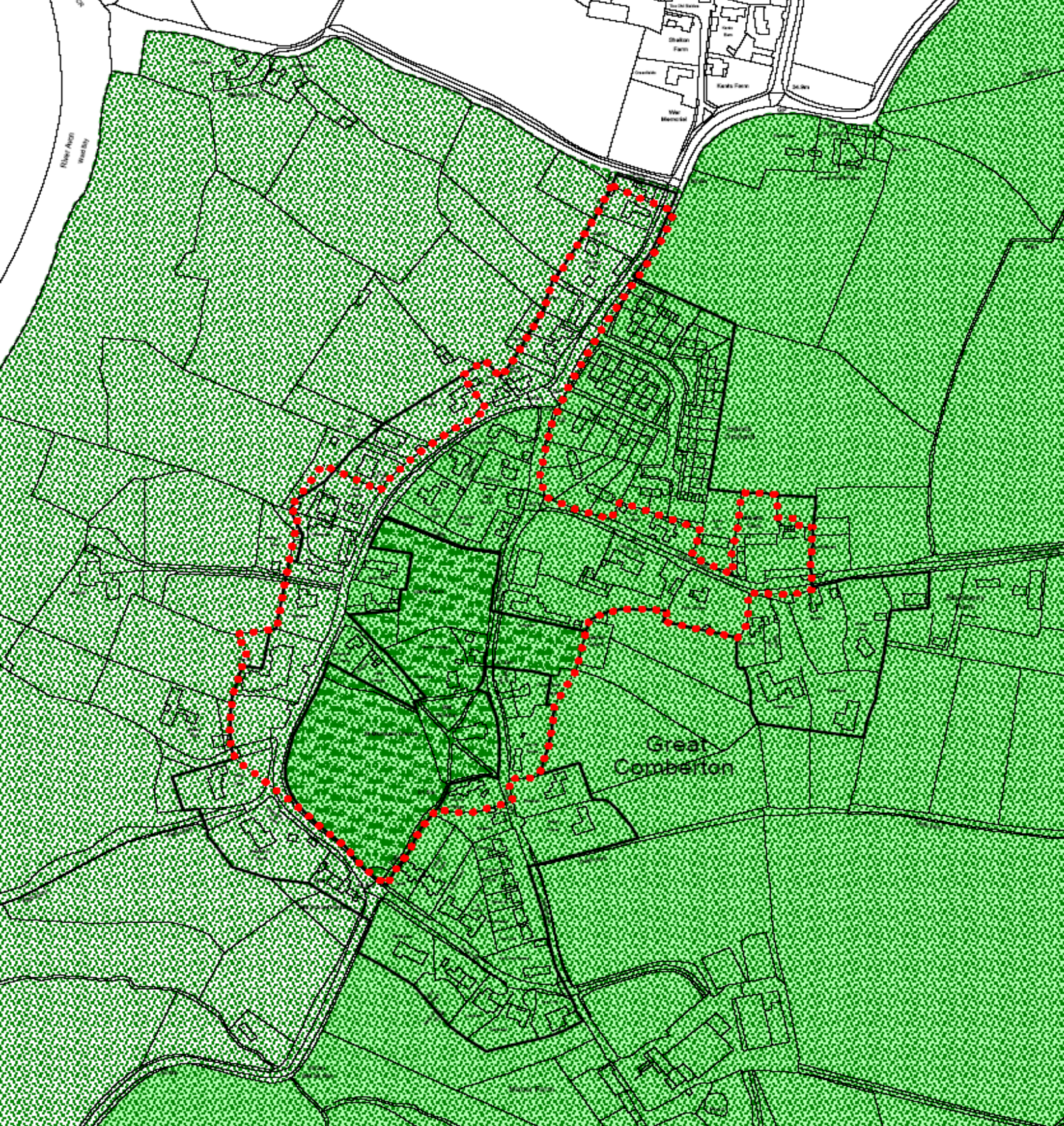
Removal of kerbs and plastic bollards on corner of Russell Street and Church Street.

Encourage hedge planting on existing frontages.

A raised causeway on the approaches to Eckington Bridge would limit the number of occasions on which diverted traffic comes through the village. Alternately a weight limit and alternative diversion for larger vehicles would have some benefit. Despite the problems there was little enthusiasm for formal traffic calming with its attendant signs, bollards and road markings.

Irregular road layout slows traffic. Mixture of walls and hedges typical. Prominence of older buildings give the village a historic feel and Bredon Hill is a constant presence in the background.





Great Comberton Village Design Statement



Cotswolds AONB



Conservation Area



Development Boundary



Protection of Open Space - Local Plan policy COM13

Source: Wychavon Local Plan (2006)

Not to scale

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Listed Buildings in Great Comberton

April Cottage, Church Lane	Grade II
Bank Cottage, Eckington Road	Grade II
Mulberry Barn, Eckington Road	Grade II
Baytree Cottage, Church Street	Grade II
Church of St Michael, Church Street	Grade II*
Church Cottage, Church Street	Grade II
Church House, Church Street	Grade II
Clarks Cottage, Eckington Road	Grade II
Fern Cottage, Russell Street	Grade II
Joes Farmhouse, Eckington Road	Grade II
Longacre, Church Street	Grade II
The Pound, Eckington Road	Grade II
Shelton Farmhouse, Lower End	Grade II
Stonewell Piece, Church Lane	Grade II
Stowe Cottage, Church Street	Grade II
The Thatch, Front Street	Grade II
Vine Cottage, Russell Street	Grade II
Whiteoaks, Eckington Road	Grade II

Further Sources of Information

- Wychavon Local Plan (2006)
- Wychavon Residential Design Guide (2010) SPD