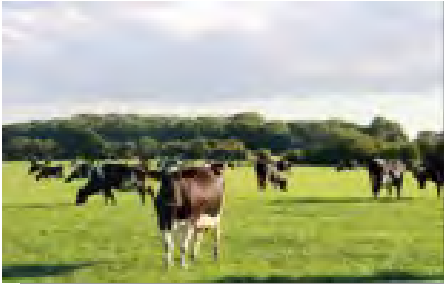


RUSHTON PARISH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT &



EATON VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

THE LANDSCAPE



Oxheys Farm & Philo Gorse



Over the Parish to the Peak District



Red Beech Farm

THE VILLAGE

Eaton 2017



The New –
Orchard House

The Old- Corner
Cottage



Eaton c.1900



New Housing—Beech Court



Barn conversion—Lower Farm Mews



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

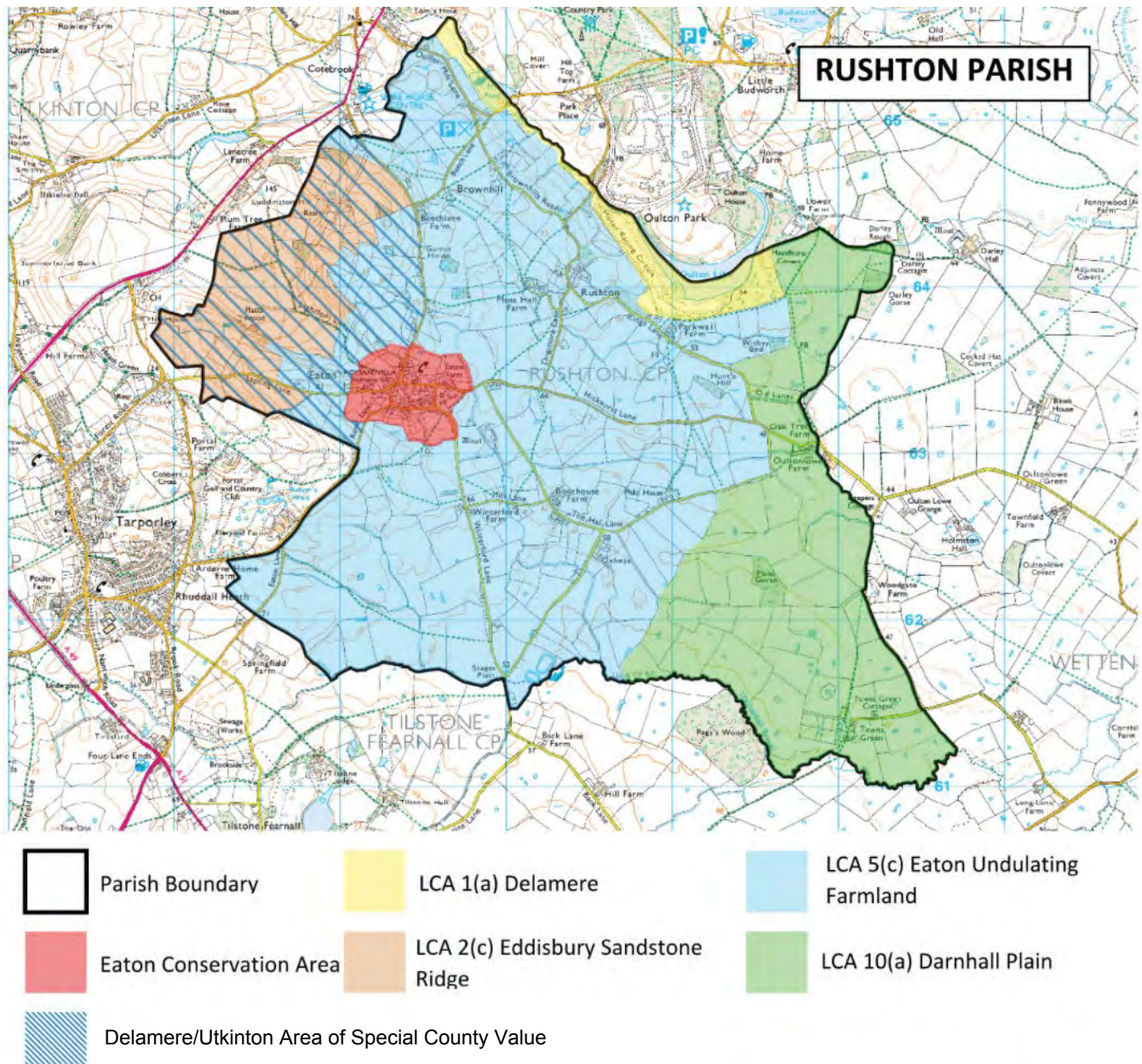
Parish Landscape Character Assessments and Village Design Statements are central government initiatives to encourage rural communities to evaluate and protect their landscapes and built environment and influence the type, size, design and materials for residential and other development to reflect local character, having regard to Local Authorities' planning policies.

A combined study for the Parish of Rushton in which the Eaton is the principle settlement was highlighted as one of the objectives in the Parish Plan and has been prepared by a Working Group of six residents. An essential ingredient in the process is public participation, so the Group invited every family in the Parish and the village's Primary Schoolchildren to comment on its initial findings and record their own views at two drop-in sessions in the Village Hall.

Their many useful observations and suggestions have influenced the final document which now stands as a compulsory reference, not just for the planning department at Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council (CW&CBC) but for everyone involved with residential, agricultural, commercial and public realm development in the Parish and Eaton. This includes infrastructure and other related elements such as parking, traffic and highway safety.

Periodic reviews will be necessary to take into account changes in Local Plan Policy and, just as importantly, the opinions of residents. This will be the continuing responsibility of the Rushton Parish Council to which body the ownership of this document has passed, and CW&CBC has suggested it could readily be adapted to form the basis of a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Key Planning Policies for the area are contained in CW&CBC's Local Plan (Parts One and Two). Policies **STRAT 9, ENV 2, ENV 4 and ENV5** in the Local Plan (Part One) are the key references, together with **R1, GBC 2, DM3, DM 44, DM45 and DM 46-48** in the Local Plan (Part Two) - see **Appendix I** for further details.



2.0 PARISH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (PLCA)

Rushton lies at the southern edge of CW&CBC's administrative area. Its boundaries are edged black on the map, an area of about 1,313 hectares (3,244 acres). The population is 457 (based on the 2011 census), over half of whom live in Eaton.

The 2016 Landscape Strategy for Cheshire West and Chester divides the borough into different Landscape Character Areas and types, depending on their particular characteristics. The Parish contains four of the sixteen Landscape Character Types (LCT's) and four of the Landscape Character Areas (LCA's) as shown on the map - an indication of the diversity of its landscape. Also marked is an additional layer of landscape protection, the "Delamere/Utkinton Area of Special County Value" which is identified in the Local Plan (Part Two) policy GBC 2 and covers part of the village and the higher ground to the west of the B5152.

The purpose of this Parish level Assessment is to identify in each Character Area the key natural physical features and the historic and present day land uses considered to be worth conserving, protecting and enhancing, and to set management objectives to achieve these aims within much tighter development policy restraints than previously existed.

Woodland, Trees, and Hedges are dealt with separately to reflect their importance as landscape features.

THE CHARACTER TYPES AND AREAS

LCT 1 Woodlands, Heaths, Meres and Mosses. LCA 1a: Delamere

- A strip of light sandy ground of low agricultural value and some woodland at the southern limit of this LCA, the former ancient open forest and heath at the heart of the “old” County of Cheshire.
- The natural characteristics have been obscured by two prominent man-made water features straddling Knickerbrook, the Parish’s northern boundary; Oulton Mill Pool and the Mill were constructed in 1781 and further downstream Oulton Lake was formed in the mid 1700’s as part of an extensive and impressive artificial landscape when Oulton Hall’s walled Deer Park was established. The lake is a non-statutory local wildlife site, a haven for wildfowl and geese due to its secluded and private location .
- The Mill is now a pleasant house conversion, the Deer Park was developed as a motor racing circuit in the late 1950’s, and the main activity on the two stretches of water is recreational coarse fishing.
- The Lake and the Pool have interfered permanently with the natural drainage of the land upstream so that both areas - at Knickerbrook, and on the Cotebrook side of the Pool - are now flood meadows of some ecological interest.

Management Objectives

- Preserve the open aspect over Oulton Mill Pool towards the former Mill, and the views across the water from the roadside.
- Encourage the establishment of willow and withey beds on at least part of the poorly drained low lying ground of minimal agricultural value upstream of the Pool, as a wildlife habitat.
- Maintain the Mill Pool picnic area as permanent public open space.

Key Features- on the plan at **Appendix III:- Viewpoints 1&2, Picnic Area (Public Open Space), Oulton Lake (Wildlife)**



Oulton Mill

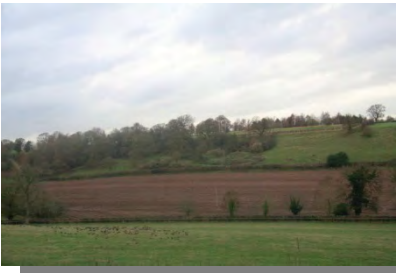


Mill Pool

LCT 2 Sandstone Ridge. LCA 2c: Eddisbury

- A small but significant portion of the Borough’s most important landscape feature lies on the west side of the Parish and is part of the recently designated “Delamere/ Utkinton Area of Special County Value” (ASCV)
- High ground dominating the rest of the Parish, scenically extremely attractive affording exceptional panoramic views to the east over the village and the Cheshire Plain to the Peak District and the Staffordshire Hills, and to the south as far as Shropshire.
- Sandstone bedrock covered with sandy loam soils of varying depths depending on gradients. The top land and the easier sloping fields can grow a variety of crops whereas the steeper fields are mainly pasture interspersed with natural areas of scrub.
- Sparsely populated and developed, except for the prominent Water Utility premises on Sapling Lane and near Cotebrook.
- Inaccessible until opened up centuries ago for farming and quarrying by Lightfoot Lane, a fine example of a sunken road, and two other grass lanes. The numerous small quarries ceased to be viable during the late 19th century and Lightfoot Lane is too narrow for modern farm traffic. It is now a well-used footpath, the only one in this landscape area.

- The topography, aspect and light sandy soil were recognised in the 1990's as eminently suitable features for golf course development and the Portal Premier Course was established on the higher ground, a popular recreational facility that blends in well with the surrounding landscape.



The Ridge



Over Eaton to Shropshire



Portal Premier Golf Course

Management Objectives

- Ensure the Special County Value planning status of the whole area is rigorously enforced to protect the village and the west side of the B5152 from skyline and any other development.
- Maintain the present land use balance between recreation, agriculture, utility buildings and housing.
- Preserve, and if feasible enhance, Lightfoot Lane by limited scrub clearance, protect the long views from it and seek the co-operation of land-owners to restore to bare rock the face of the one accessible former sandstone quarries as a historic monument.



Inscription on Quarry Face

Key Features (see Appendix III). V's 3,4 & 5, Public Right of Way

LCT 5 and 5c Undulating Enclosed Farmland. LCA 5c: Eaton.

- Falling gently to the east with an underlying mudstone bedrock and a good depth of naturally well drained sandy loam giving way to thinner soils over less permeable glacial boulder clay with a few pockets of poorly drained mire.
- Many sources of constantly flowing good quality water arising along the spring line that runs roughly north-south through Eaton where there are several water features, notably the "Town" well on Lower Lane under the Old Smithy.
- The Village sits comfortably on the edge of this pleasing rolling country- side sheltered by the high ground of the ridge behind it and with an open easterly aspect.
- Long recognised as extremely fertile and productive land with dairying as the principle enterprise from around the 1850's to satisfy the demands of the nearby rapidly expanding conurbations. The village's water cooled the milk before refrigeration and met the needs of the large numbers of cows as by the 1950's there were 26 dairy farms and smallholdings in this area, including a staggering 17 in the village. A lengthy transition period followed when generous Government grants were introduced to encourage increased and more efficient milk production through modernisation, amalgamation, new buildings, land drainage and reclamation.
- Eventually, milk was in surplus, quotas were introduced and the Milk Marketing Board closed. The outcome by the late 1980's was a reduction in the number of dairy businesses to just three, none in Eaton where the farms were either too small or too cramped for space to expand. Two of the farms outside the village, Moss Hall and Red Beech in the hamlet of Rushton on Hickhurst Lane, are now arable units operating on a large scale and the two surviving dairy businesses at Ox Heys, on Ox Heys Lane, and Parkwall Farm on Kings Lane have expanded and modernised.



Lightfoot Lane



The "Town" Well

- Although the drive to increase milk and crop production led to many marl pits and former sandholes and brickclay workings being restored to agriculture, and ditches were piped and hedges grubbed out, the landscape has hardly suffered as enough hedgerow and other trees were left to maintain the appearance of a wooded landscape. The only exception is in the south west of the Parish where the aspect over a large area of land once part of Flaxyards Farm is far more open following the extensive removal of hedges in the 1980's.



Flaxyards Farm

Two notable historic locations are the Roman villa at Eaton Cottage Farm on Sapling Lane - the only one known in Cheshire - and the buried site of the moated Rushton Hall, off The Hall Lane to the south east of the village, a protected Ancient Monument.



Hypocaust



Archeologist's Impression(1982)



Site of Rushton Old Hall

Management Objectives:

- Encourage farmers and landowners to continue to fulfil their role as custodians of the countryside by caring for their hedgerows, gates and fences, managing their field ponds and pits to benefit wildlife, and creating wildlife habitats in poorly drained, low lying locations that cannot be reclaimed to agriculture.
- Endeavour to maintain as much as possible of the high quality land in agriculture by seeking CW&CBC's agreement to a stricter interpretation of its Countryside policy so as to restrict alternative uses to locations where there are already houses and ideally buildings, and not just bare land.
- Ensure the planning concessions available to agriculture for "tied" farm workers' dwellings and the industry's comparative freedom from limitations on the size, siting, design and materials of new buildings, does not lead to unplanned over-development of individual farmsteads, and whatever the scale of development comprehensive landscaping conditions should be applied and rigorously enforced.
- Preserve the existing mainly small to medium sized field pattern, subject to the reasonable needs of present day farming methods for larger enclosures.
- Seek the cooperation of householders in conserving the rural character of the roads, lanes and grass verges by avoiding high boarded or wrought iron gates and walled entrance splays, features that are more in keeping with an urban environment.
- Maintain the historic low density and scattered settlement pattern and the variety of farm, house and cottage designs, and in particular seek to reverse the trend of incremental extension of cottages and small houses that has resulted in large dwellings of modern appearance that do not blend with their rural surroundings.
- Ensure the Area of Special County Value status of the land west of the B5152 is protected in the same way as the previous Character Area from skyline and new roadside residential development, large scale extensions, replacement oversized dwellings and isolated farm buildings. All these detract from the high visual amenity of the lower parts of the wooded hillside when viewed from the southern and eastern parts of the parish, and further afield.
- Ensure the regularly used footpaths in an extensive network of rights of way are maintained, their accessibility improved by selective use of wooden kissing gates, and the two areas of open space within the village, the much used Play Zone and the Village Green, are kept tidy.
- Ensure the continued protection of the sites of the unique Roman villa and the moated vestiges of Rushton Hall.

Key Features (see Appendix III). Village Green and Play Zone (Public Open Spaces), Viewpoints V 6 to 10. Public Rights of Way. Roman Villa. Rushton Hall.

LCT 10 Cheshire Plain East

LCT 10a: Darnhall Plain.

- Lower lying and relatively level terrain below the 50m contour; mudstone bedrock overlaid with a heavy boulder clay under a shallow topsoil only suitable for permanent pastures unless under-drained.
- Ancient hedgerows enclosing a variety of field sizes with deep ditches to aid drainage and markedly fewer and poorer hedgerow trees due to the much heavier subsoil. More field ponds as marling was essential historically to lighten and fertilise the land.
- Sparsely populated with only two farms and three farm cottages. Both Oak Tree and Towns Green were once dairy holdings but ceased for the same reasons as others in the Parish without the option to change to extensive arable cropping as the land is too heavy.

Management Objectives:

Generally the same as in the previous Character Area except that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the siting, design, scale, materials and landscaping of further agricultural development as such buildings are far more prominent in this landscape due to the significantly more open nature of the countryside.

Key Features- see Appendix III. Viewpoints V 11&12. Public Rights of Way.

2.1 WOODLAND, TREES AND HEDGES.

The Parish.

The landscape is typical of many in the county, a historic patchwork of fields enclosed by a mixture of mostly hawthorn and blackthorn hedges. There are numerous hedgerow trees, mainly oak, ash and sycamore, originally planted to shelter grazing cattle and to provide fuel and some timber of building quality, but now of only amenity value.

As the map below shows there are only a few areas of woodland, far less proportionately than the rest of Cheshire and the Country as the quality of the soil was rightly considered too valuable for trees. Those established in the mid-1800's by the Oulton Estate, Hunt's Hill and Philo Gorse for example, were planted as cover for foxes and game birds and carefully located as landscape features to break the long southerly views from Oulton Hall and the Park. Several included hazel for coppicing for woodturning, hence the name of one of the oldest 'Hazelhurst Covert' on the south-east side of Oulton Lake. This still contains remnants of woodland edge blossom and fruiting species, such as wild white cherry, to benefit game birds and enhance the amenity interest, as well as forming an attractive backcloth to the Park, and now the Motor Racing Circuit.

The few small areas of un-farmable land were planted with willow for basket making, the abandoned "Withey Bed" on Parkwall Farm being one, now providing contrasting foliage colour throughout the year. There are also remnants within the Circuit of the many specimen species such as Beech, Oak, Lime, Sweet Chestnut and Horse Chestnut planted when the Park was landscaped.



Kings Field, Withey Beds,
Darley Gorse



Spinney, Moss Hall Farm



Circuit, Island & Hazlehurst

No further tree planting of any significance then took place until the 1970's and 80's when four amenity and sporting spinneys were established on Beech Lane and Eaton Farms. Also, several of the Norway Spruce in a former Christmas tree plantation, Maddens Covert, were left to grow on to maturity with other native hardwoods, and when the Portal Premier golf course was developed extensive planting of a wide variety of species formed part of the landscaping scheme.

More recently, a few field corners in Rushton have been planted up and new hedgerows established on Red Beech Farm with some roadside saplings on Ox Heys Farm. Elsewhere, hedgerow oak and ash have been allowed to grow on from self-sown saplings and a number of small spinneys have been planted on Townsgreen Farm. These have enhanced the rather flat and open terrain in that remote south east corner of the Parish, a welcome landscape feature.

At farms named after trees, for example Oak Tree, Rushton, Beech Lane and Red Beech, these species were probably planted as landmarks when they were built, and the fine specimen at Oak Tree is still standing.

Management Objectives

- Encourage landowners and farmers with finance at Parish Council level if feasible to plant non-productive field corners and protect self-seeded hedgerow saplings from mechanical hedge cutting, especially oak, ash and sycamore which are extremely difficult to establish in any other way due to the poor nutrient-lacking soils under hedgerows. This is particularly important where there are over-mature, dying or damaged trees nearby.
- Improve the strain and stock of hedgerow oaks by selectively replacing the stunted “stag headed” trees with sessile oak which is better suited to the soils of the Parish.
- Apply for a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to cover a number of significant individual species and several groups that enhance the Parish’s landscape, after consultation with the owners involved.



Oak Tree Farm, Rushton



Ageing Hedgerow Oaks, Hickhurst Lane

Woodland in the Parish



Planted mid 1800's



Amenity Planting 1960's to date

The Village—see the Village Tree Location Plan below.

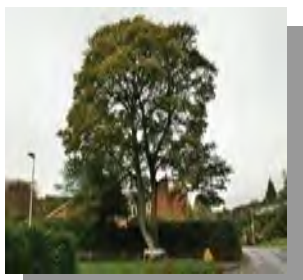
Trees have always been important features in Eaton's landscape and its immediate surroundings. Several were probably planted when the historic properties named after them were built, for example Yew Tree and Oak Tree (though its oak has gone). Elm Tree Court had a Weeping Elm at its entrance from Lower Lane, sadly lost to Dutch Elm Disease, but a nearby majestic Sycamore now provides a focal point.

Other notable trees are the two prominent Red Oaks on the Green providing outstanding Autumn colour and a compact Swedish Whitebeam at the junction of Lower and Winterford Lanes which has attractive spring blossom and autumn berries. The school's hornbeam arbour is also an interesting and eye catching feature.

The importance and quality of Eaton's trees in the streetscene was fully recognized by the 1967 Tree Preservation Order (TPO).



Yew Tree Farm



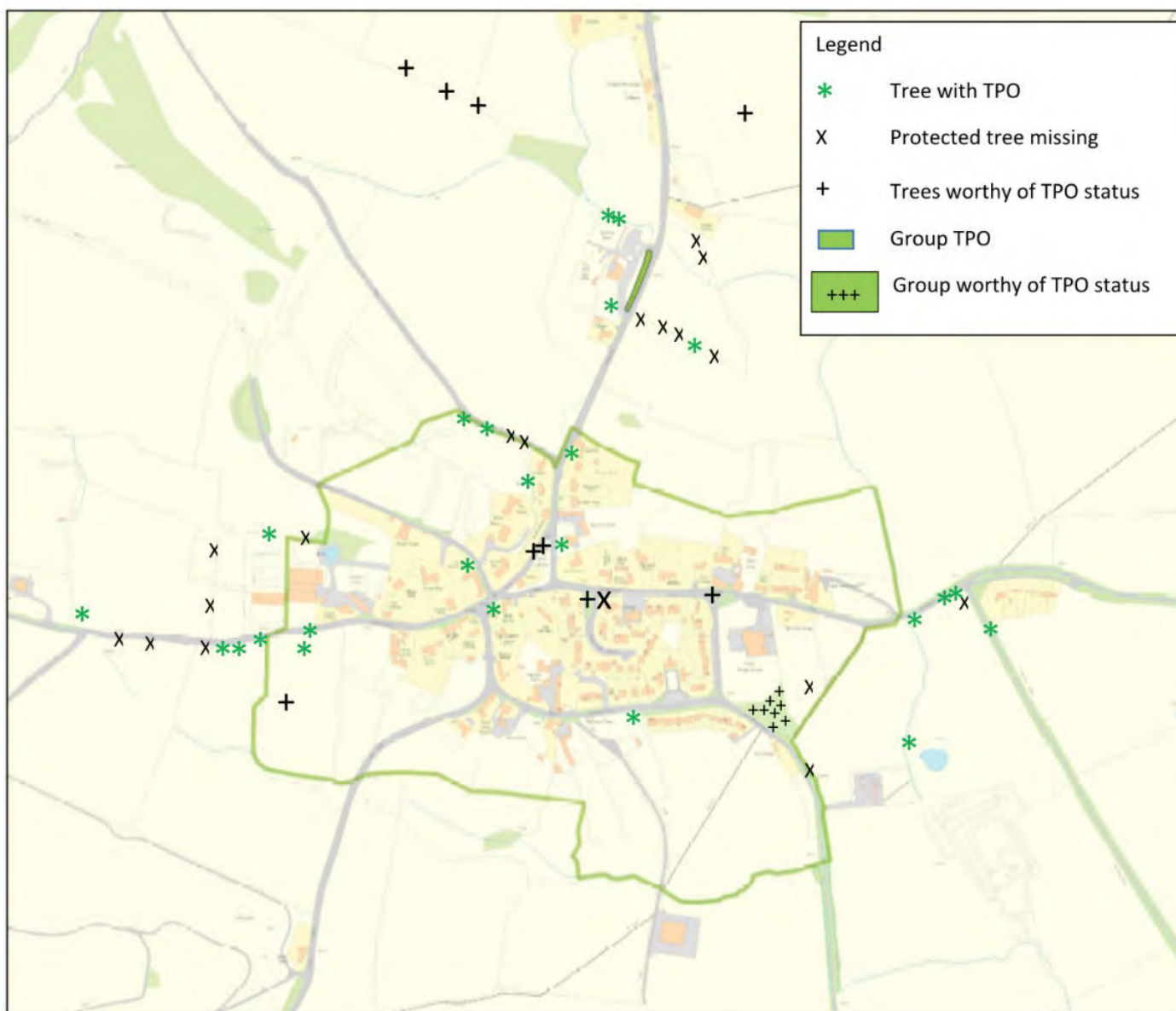
Sycamore, Elm Tree Court



Red Oaks, Village Green



Swedish Whitebeam



Eaton's designation as a Conservation Area in 1975 strengthened the protection for all trees within its boundaries, not just those named in the earlier TPO, and CW&CBC introduced a further TPO on trees at the former Red Lion PH when it was considering a recent application for residential development there. This along with the earlier Order protecting the roadside Cedars will hopefully ensure that the new housing on this site will at least be partially screened from view in this rather prominent location. Unfortunately, the 1967 TPO is now well out of date as some 42% of the trees are no longer standing. However, there are others worthy of inclusion, many of which were mentioned by the community at the consultation stage and these are shown on the same location plan.

The historic hedges of thorn and holly are also very much a feature, probably planted to keep the village farms' livestock that once used the roads to reach the outlying fields out of gardens and vegetable patches. Whilst that function is not relevant today, they are far more appealing than the alternatives of leylandii and privet, or any type of fence.



Traditional Boundary, Edgewell Lane

Management Objectives

- Seek a review of the 1967 TPO by CW&CBC's Forestry Officer and ask for further trees, all either on the village green or roadside verges and considered by residents to be worthy of protection, to be added to the Order together with significant lengths of the village's historic roadside hedges, subject to the approval of the householders and landowners affected.
- Recommend to the Parish Council the appointment of a Tree Warden to prepare a "Parish Tree and Hedgerow Action Plan" to reflect the interest shown in trees by residents during the public consultation exercise, and encourage the Community to fully appreciate the significant contribution trees and hedges make to the landscape and the village's character by organising identification and tree health walks.
- Encourage residents with sponsorship and grant assistance at Parish Council level to plant more trees as community and school projects. Small native species that do not cast much shade would be appropriate in gardens, especially blossom and fruiting varieties such as the indigenous damson, with larger individual specimens, for example oak, ash, beech and birch, on the wider grass verges but not the Village Green.

3.0 THE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

Eaton is the principle settlement in the Parish and the boundaries of its long established Conservation Area introduced in 1975 shown on the **Map on page 4** were generously drawn to include as much open ground as developed land in a total of around 31 hectares (77 acres). This feature has successfully prevented the village encroaching beyond its historic limits into its own “green belt” to which two further layers of additional protection against expansion have been introduced.

Firstly, Eaton is covered by the “Countryside” designation under Local Plan (Part One) policy STRAT 9, where development is restricted to that requiring a countryside location and secondly, the “Utkinton/Delamere Area of Special County Value” designated under Policy GBC 2 in the Local Plan (Part Two) strengthens the protection for the particularly attractive landscape to the west of the B 5152 but still within the village boundary.

The purpose of the Village Design Statement is to preserve and ideally enhance the unique historic and local character of Eaton and the developed locations in the remainder of the Parish by selecting the most appropriate design features, style and materials for all types of building operations.

Historical Background, The Setting.

The Roman road from Whitchurch to Wilderspool is reputed to have passed through where the village now stands. The Roman presence is also marked by the remains of a retired General’s villa unearthed at Eaton Cottage Farm in 1980 which dates back to AD 170-200, but it was not until “The Dark Ages”, a period of 600-700 years following the Romans’ departure, that this part of the Country was colonized.

To quote from the late Maisie Tredwell’s fascinating history of Eaton-by-Tarporley, “Links across the Centuries”

“The site of Eaton would commend itself to early settlers; they built where facilities were found. Water, of primary importance, was in abundant supply. Stone and wood for building were readily available. The geographical advantage of being sheltered from the north and above the swampy lowlands would be an added influence.”

The settlement would also have benefited from its situation on the Roman road at a key junction with three other tracks, the location of the **Cross and Steps:-**



The growth of the Village up to 1914.

Eaton is a derivation of the Anglo-Saxon “eau-tun”, a community or settlement on water, and is one of several in the County with the same name, though it is not recorded in the Domesday Book of 1065 as it was then a dependency of the adjoining and much earlier settlement of Rushton. However, “Great and Little Eaton” are mentioned in the Pipe Rolls of 1240 and much later “Eaton Towne” featured in the Civil War records of 1645. Royalist troops camped here and clashed with the Parliamentarians nearby, hence the suggestion that Royal Farm, Royal Lodge and Royal Lane were so named to commemorate their presence.



Lower House

Quite what Eaton would have looked like by the end of the 17th century is open to speculation but there was at least a substantial manor, Lower House, on Lower Lane, and parts of its 16th century sandstone, brick and slate roofed structure with some stone mullioned windows have survived.

The 1760-1820 Enclosure Acts were the impetus for a huge national expansion in agricultural

productivity. Eaton developed as a tightly knit settlement of many farms, smallholdings, houses, cottages and artisans' premises clustered along its narrow lanes, and around its springs and wells. Accessibility, water, and the suitability of the surrounding land for grass production for grazing and conservation were the reasons for its increasing agricultural importance. Rushton, nominally a hamlet, also grew but as a scattered community of many farmsteads (most of them much larger than those in Eaton) and workers' cottages.

Over a century of growth took place against an unsettled background of civil strife when land and property frequently changed hands at the monarch's whim. The lack of any continuity of ownership meant that most of Eaton and Rushton developed without any semblance of common form and construction. Nothing changed until the mid-1800's when both Parishes were almost entirely owned by the Oulton and Arderne Estates.

The advent of a more peaceful and prosperous era gave the landowners the opportunity to exert some architectural influence on new buildings. This is evident in the similar imposing and comparatively decorative designs of Eaton House on Lower Lane and Park House at Rushton built by the Oulton Estate as farmhouses in 1840 and 1841 respectively, probably on the sites of much older dwellings. They are now private houses sensitively renovated to retain their distinctive features. Of the same period and style is the former Chapel on Eaton Lane, just north of the village, attractively converted to residential use in the 1970's.



Eaton House



Park House

The 1851 Cheshire Survey, basically a census, was the first official record of the numbers of dwellings and inhabitants in both ancient parishes. It also listed the types of businesses and the residents' occupations providing a fascinating insight into a community almost entirely dependent on agriculture and the two landed Estates for its livelihood. As well as its many farmsteads, Eaton had a school, a public house, three shops (one also a saddlers) and a smithy. It provided employment for a wheelwright, sawyer, shoemaker, tailor, two joiners, bricklayer and a butcher, all of whom would have lived at their place of work or nearby.

Most of the growing workforce on the land also lived in the village. All these homes would have varied considerably in size, style, construction and materials, a reflection of the relative importance of each occupier's role in the community.

The substantial 17th century timber framed farmers' houses on sandstone plinths with thatch roofs (Eaton Cottage, Oak Tree and Well House, for example) still exist today, as do others built a century or so later of brick with slate or small-tile roofs at Eaton Farm, Royal Farm and Yew Tree Farm, probably as replacements of much older and not so well built properties.



Oak Tree



Well House

The next in importance were the tradesmen's dwellings and business premises supporting and servicing the farming community. Many still exist but are now all in residential use, such as the School House and School Room, Silver Birches (originally a Public House known as the Alvanley Arms), the Old

Smithy, Sapling Cottage and The Green (formerly shops), Bay Tree Cottage (once the wheelwright's workshop, with many outbuildings) and Saddlers Cottage.



Eaton Farm



Bay Tree Cottage

The least important in terms of quality were the numerous small cottages of flimsy timber framed construction with brick or wattle and daub infill panels and low thatch roofs. These were often built very close to one another or in terraces of three or more and were occupied by farm and quarry labourers and many of the employees on the two estates.

The common feature of all the dwellings up to the early part of the 20th century is the use of locally sourced materials-oak grown in the Parish or Delamere Forest for wall frames, rafters, trusses, joists, doors and windows, sandstone from the quarries in the hills behind the village, bricks made from clay pits in the Parish and straw for thatching, although by the 1800's Welsh slates and Staffordshire tiles were being used as more permanent roofing materials.

Eaton's stock of farms, dwellings and business premises peaked by the end of the 19th century, and are recorded on this annotated 1912 Ordnance Survey map.



The Village from 1914 to the present day.

The last 100 or so years in Eaton's history have seen a gradual change from a village of tenanted dwellings belonging to the two landed Estates and the inhabitants who worked there or in the Parish, to one with a majority of owned-properties whose occupiers commute daily to the local towns and the more distant conurbations, or who still keep livestock on, and cultivate the village's farms, or are retired.

The period embracing the two World Wars, from 1914 to 1945, saw no new development, in fact quite the reverse; it was a time of considerable decay. The effect of the Industrial Revolution came late to Eaton but the advent of mechanised farming operations to replace horse power (not so drastic for the Parish's many dairy holdings) together with a downturn in the fortunes of the Estates meant that many workers and tradesmen were laid off and had to move away. Their cottages and premises were not required and were simply left to fall down, any usable materials being recycled to repair other dwellings.

The resultant lack of demand for sandstone and locally produced bricks for new dwellings and farm buildings brought about the closure of the quarries, the brickclay workings on Hickhurst Lane and the sandholes dotted throughout the Parish, leading to an exodus of quarry and brickyard workers, and consequently more empty cottages.

Notable exceptions of workers homes that have survived in close to their original form are Post Office Cottage on Lower Lane, and Hunters Close on Sapling Lane - formerly a row of three thatched cottages.



Post Office Cottage



Hunters Close

On other older dwellings, thatch was often replaced with corrugated iron and later asbestos (for instance on part of Bay Tree Cottage) and half-timbered walls were rendered over to reduce the landlords' maintenance costs.

The declining state of the village's housing prevailed through the Depression of the late 1920's, WW2 and the period of austerity that followed it, despite the need for new dwellings for the sizable workforce still required to service the dairy farms which are always much more labour intensive than the arable sector. The two Estates also required staff, albeit not nearly as many as before WW1.

However, the situation did improve in the early 1950's with the arrival of the publicly funded houses and bungalows built on land in or close to the village acquired from the two principle landowners on the understanding that priority had to be given to re-housing farm and estate workers still living in the remaining estate cottages. Most of these had by then been condemned as unsuitable for habitation and were subject to closing or demolition orders unless improved to a habitable condition, usually unaffordable.

Out of economic necessity, the first phase on Edgewell Lane was constructed using mass produced and therefore cheaper materials to nationally established design standards rather than with the aim of blending in with any local vernacular style. However, the second and third phases of houses and bungalows which soon followed showed more varied designs, even incorporating some decorative traditional black fascia boarding and white infill panels in dwellings on Whalley Drive, and in 2010 the appearance of the first-phase dwellings was greatly enhanced when the original concrete panelled walls were replaced with brickwork.

In the countryside, almost all the poorly built and condemned mainly thatched cottages that contained nothing of salvage value were just left to fall down and the sites reclaimed to agricultural use.



1 & 2 Whalley Drive

The increasing desire of townspeople to move to the country to enjoy a rural way of life in preference to the congested and polluted towns and cities surrounding the Cheshire Plain was made possible by the advent of affordable motor cars. Many people were prepared to travel daily to their urban workplaces or simply retire to the country, but this hardly affected Eaton until the early 1960's as before then the village was considered too remote. The demand gradually generated a value for and a supply of uninhabited cottages for demolition, building plots in gardens and orchards or paddocks attached to former smallholdings, on which "one-off" houses and bungalows appeared. Most incorporated the popular features of those years - picture windows and a great deal of glass, rendered block and brick walls, standard concrete roof tiles and plastic rainwater goods. Large and prominent garages with "up and over" doors were also fashionable. The plots were a decent size as building land had not yet acquired the high value of later years.

Also, the few remaining poor quality thatched cottages in the village were sold by the Estates when they fell vacant and were virtually rebuilt. Church Cottage and Vine Cottage are two examples.

The early 1970's saw the speculative development of Elm Tree Court, a mix of twenty detached and part-linked two storey houses and bungalows on smaller plots designed in a more intimate style with open front gardens and some shared drives. They were built to meet an increasing demand for lower cost village living, and the size and variety of the dwellings are in keeping with the village.

Eaton was designated a Conservation Area in 1973 in recognition of its heritage as a historic settlement and this resulted in greater control by the Planning Authority over the design and materials for the few "in-fill" houses built at that time to reflect the style and construction of the older village properties, ideally incorporating salvaged locally made or close-matching bricks, slate or small tile roofs, and purpose built wooden windows.

From the 1980's to date the village has seen a variety of new housing, the most notable being in the form of conversions of several solidly built brick and sandstone farm buildings with slate or small tile roofs made redundant as a result of the amalgamation of many of the farms and smallholdings. Most of their unique features have been retained through imaginative design and strict planning conditions to preserve their character and historic identity. The outbuildings at Lower Farm and The Old Barn on Lower Lane are two of the successful conversions and the "drift houses" at both properties together with the "flake" in the Barn at Silver Birches are fine examples of building details incorporated in the designs, as are the many decorative iron wall ties and diamond and other patterned vents in the brickwork at loft level in several of the barns.



The Orchard



Church Cottage



15,26 & 24 Elm Tree

Former 'Drift House'
The Old Barn



The Flake' Silver
Birches

Through the 1970's and 80's several of the substantial mainly brick and slate farmhouses were sold and over time upgraded to private houses, as has happened at Beech House, Eaton Farm, Royal Farm, Yew Tree Farm and the thatch-roofed Silver Birches.

New dwellings during this period include a well-designed dormer bungalow ‘Laneside’ replacing a single storey pre-fab; “Orchard House”, on an “in-fill” site which closely reflects the style of the traditional cottage next to it; two prominent skyline dwellings, and “Beech Court”, a pair of attractively designed cottages on the site of a derelict and structurally unsound range of farm buildings.



Laneside



Orchard House



Beech Court

Two small houses have replaced a 1950’s bungalow, formerly a shop and petrol station. These have a common entrance drive with front gardens open to the road harking back to the layout of Elm Tree Court some 30 years previously, and the Smithy has been sensitively converted to a cottage without any loss of historic identity.

Smithy, c 1900



Smithy, 2017

Eaton Today



3.1 THE BUILDING LEGACY.

Four centuries of sporadic growth and change have shaped today's Eaton with its wide variety of dwelling types, size and construction within the village's tightly drawn historic boundaries.

The unique Conservation Area, the wealth of Grade 2 listed features and buildings scheduled at **Appendix III** – possibly a higher proportion than in any other village in the County – and the Countryside designation of the surrounding farm land to prevent Eaton's expansion ought to be sufficient protection for its valuable heritage and local character, but unfortunately successive planning authorities have not been able to resist some inappropriately designed residential developments, not just in Eaton but throughout the Parish.

Accordingly, the introduction of Design and Material Guidelines reflecting the views of residents and school children at the consultation stage, and the Working Group's opinions and preferences ought to strengthen the Planning Department's hand in their future negotiations with prospective developers.

It is also important to seek protection by way of listing for several dwellings and other items of special historic interest in the Parish not already covered such as the Well and "fingerpost" signs shown below, subject to prior discussion with their owners.



Well at Knickerbrook Cottage



Fingerposts at Rushton and the Village Green



3.2 DESIGN AND MATERIAL GUIDELINES (DMG's)

To be taken into account by developers, applicants and decision makers on planning applications within Eaton's village envelope.

General.

DMG1. Listed and pre-1914 dwellings.

Extensions and renovations should closely match their historic design and features utilising compatible salvaged materials wherever feasible.

DMG2. Post- 1914 dwellings.

Dated elements of design and materials such as Georgian-style windows, interlocking concrete tile roofs, and featureless elevations should be improved or replaced when these properties are altered or extended, to encourage conformity.

DMG3. New dwellings.

Where policy allows as "infilling" within the village envelope, there should be a mix of types and styles in small groups of detached or linked small houses and cottages designed to blend with neighbouring properties in terms of scale and materials.

Encouragement should be given to proposals for redeveloping sites in Eaton only that are currently occupied by houses and bungalows in large gardens with small groups, or terraces, of cottages more suited to the village.

DMG4. Redundant farm buildings.

Conversion of the remaining limited stock of structurally sound traditional barns and ranges to residential or business use should be encouraged in preference to demolition and replacement, to retain their historic character.

Specific

DMG 5. Walls.

Should be built of mellow reclaimed or reproduction “Cheshire” brick incorporating some of the variety of traditional decorative design features shown. Alternatively, white washed rendering to blend with adjoining dwellings, with black and white half timbered panels if appropriate.



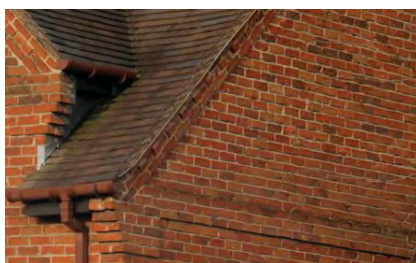
School House, Flemish Bond



School House, Brick Lintels



Yew Tree, Decorative Corbelling



Meadow View, Corbelling



Orchard House, White rendered finish

DMG 6. Roofs.

Blue grey slates or Staffordshire tiles preferred, but size not an issue. Colour to blend with the grey and red shades of most existing roofs. Patterned tiles a bonus. Extensions to thatched dwellings to be of similar materials. Flat roofs and modern skylights should be avoided where they are visible from the roadway. Roof mounted solar and photovoltaic panels, aerials and satellite dishes, although acceptable in principle as part of the modern lifestyle, should be as unobtrusive as possible.



Laneside; Attractive Tile Pattern



Church Cottage; Matching Extension

DMG 7. Chimneys.

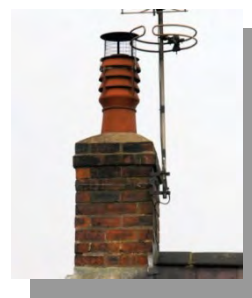
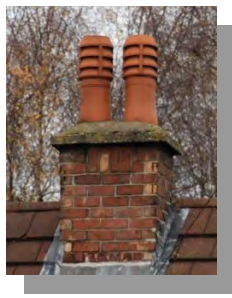
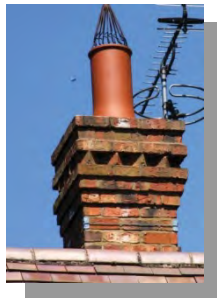
Once 'planted' on historic thatched dwellings, later very ornate, especially on farm houses, but plain stacks with simple brick features common on 1950's dwellings, some with decorative pots. Although not needed in modern houses without open fires, they have a place as a design feature on otherwise plain ridge lines. An increasingly practical function today is to take the flues for log burning stoves and central heating systems.



Parkside Cottage



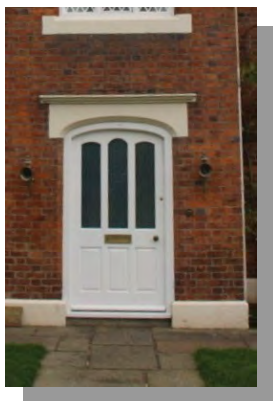
Boot house Farm



A variety of stacks and decorative pots

DMG 8. Front Doors.

Pre -1914 houses and cottages featured decorative solid panel doors, some with plain glazing and stone surrounds. On new dwellings, purpose built vertical boarded or panelled type are a practical alternative.



Eaton House



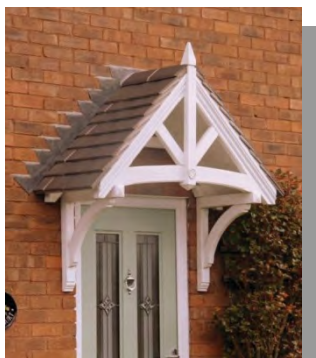
School House

DMG 9. Porches.

Traditionally ornate and open fronted. Simpler styles or recessed openings acceptable as features on otherwise plain walls.



Eaton Farmhouse



7 Elm Tree Court



17 Edgewell Lane

DMG 10. Windows.

Original cottage style with small panes not practical today but modern equivalents acceptable, with matching square or rectangular casements to take double glazing. Timber the preferred material but UPVC a popular alternative on grounds of cost and longevity.



Former Post Office



8 Lower Lane

DMG 11. Garage Doors.

Should be as inconspicuous as possible, preferably facing away from the road, if not, of timber construction.



DMG 12. Boundaries and Gates.

Dressed or random sandstone walls preferred topped with thorn or holly hedges – a feature of the village's historic streetscene. Pedestrian gates either traditional wrought iron or timber, with five-bar field type for vehicular



8 Lower Lane



Yew Tree Farm



Spinney Cottage

4.0 INFRASTRUCTURE.

For Eaton and the Parish to function in a meaningful way requires not just design and other objectives for the private sector but a public sector that is able to fulfill its own duty of care for the infrastructure.

A wide range of permanent installations, facilities and services, collectively termed **The Public Realm**, are the responsibility of CW&CBC, Statutory Undertakings, our Parish Council and independent bodies such as the committees responsible for the Jessie Hughes Village Hall and St Thomas' Church.

Related issues are Parking, Traffic Volumes and Highway Safety.

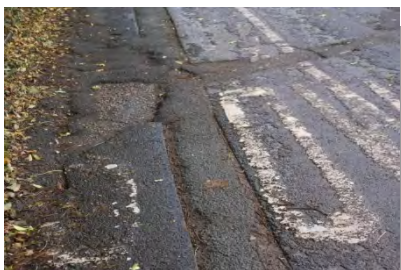
THE PUBLIC REALM.

CW&CBC is responsible for most of the elements that are generally neither being provided in full nor maintained to a standard residents are entitled to expect by virtue of their Central and Local Government taxes, partly due to nationally imposed financial restraints. The problem areas are:-

Open Spaces. Community facilities for all age groups with a tennis court, a bowling green, an informal open area with seats, and a café, were on the residents' wish list. Happily, a children's play area has now been provided following a great deal of hard work by the Parish Council, and private enterprise has resulted in a café at Lower House Farm, "The Drays", which has been very well received.

Grass verge maintenance within and on the outskirts of the village is sporadic and not to an acceptable standard and the Village Green has suffered from a lack of care in that mown grass has neither been mulched nor removed and weeds are not controlled, although there have been signs of improvement due to recent Parish Council pressure.

Highways. An absence of a coordinated and prioritised maintenance programme to deal with potholes, resurfacing, road markings and road drainage. Unfortunately, when anything is done the standard of workmanship is at best only fair. Lower Lane is a typical example of a neglected highway.



Poor Surface



Neglected Sign



No Marking at Junction

Street Furniture. Too many of the necessarily vast array of different types of road signs are in poor condition.

Street Lighting. The appearance of the village suffers from an unsightly mix of types and sizes of lighting columns more associated with an urban environment. However, the situation has improved with some standardised columns and downlights installed in conjunction with Scottish Power as part of the long term undergrounding of some electricity supply cables.

SCOTTISH POWER and BRITISH TELECOM are the two Statutory Undertakings responsible for the untidy clutter and poorly maintained appearance of their large number and assortment of poles, stays, overhead cables and associated equipment throughout the Parish. They have a detrimental impact on the environment and there seems to be little sense of pride in the standard of workmanship when any upgrading work and alterations take place.



Untidy Wirescape, Rushton

In contrast, **RUSHTON PARISH COUNCIL** and the **VILLAGE HALL** and **CHURCH COMMITTEES** set an example in the way they maintain the property they either own or for which they are responsible, with the invaluable assistance of resident volunteers.

The cross, village sign, stocks stone, and the former telephone box are all cared for by a few community minded individuals and an active Parish Council which has also recently promoted a number of projects normally regarded as CW&CBC's responsibility. These have been financed out of its precept with help from CW&CBC, the Ward Councillor, and grant-providing bodies, the most notable being the recent provision of a fully equipped Playzone and Multi-Use Games Area shared with the Primary School. Another project is the recently completed former County Council picnic area at Oulton Mill closed some ten years ago as a cost saving exercise. The land is now owned by the Parish Council and has been significantly improved with grant assistance to a facility of significant benefit to the community. The erection of speed limit signs and speed monitoring equipment, the renovation of the Parish's few remaining traditional "fingerpost" signs, improved litter bins and seats, and new steps and railings on the village green are other recent examples of Parish Council promoted and jointly funded projects. In addition, the Council has taken over from CW&CBC the task of organising litter collection on most of the Parish's roads using volunteers as pickers, and Dog Waste and Footpath Wardens are also voluntary Parish appointments. All three initiatives must be saving CW&CBC considerable amounts of time, effort and expenditure annually without any apparent reduction in the community's council tax burden.

Potential Solutions

1. The feedback from the Community consultation highlighted support for the devolution of the management responsibilities for a considerable number of CW&CBC's services to the Parish Council on a permanent basis to fulfil their commitment to the concept of Localism with a full-cost, annual contribution. The Parish Council will need to decide whether it has, or can organise, the capacity to take on these extra commitments. If so, then street furniture and public open space maintenance might be suitable tasks, as would road gully cleaning, road sweeping, gritting of minor roads and lanes, and snow clearance.
2. CW&CBC should agree their short, medium and long term highway and street lighting maintenance programmes with the Parish Council.
3. Scottish Power should plan the undergrounding of the remainder its service cables as a medium to long term objective, ideally as a joint venture with British Telecom. If this is not feasible, then the existing untidy array of poles and overhead wires should be rationalised and ideally every opportunity taken to share poles. Although sharing is not current policy, an exception is surely justifiable in such an important Conservation Village and in the Parish's protected countryside.

PARKING

Problem Areas and possible Solutions.

1. The thirty four 1950's dwellings on Lower, Winterford, and Edgewell Lanes were initially provided with a row of three garages and an open roadside parking area for about twelve vehicles, insufficient by present day standards.

Parking has since been made available within the curtilage of some of the dwellings, particularly those now privately owned, but there are several properties where even road frontage parking is not ideal, for instance those on the narrow section of Winterford Lane opposite the School as it restricts traffic movement to a single lane.

Possible solution: Weaver Vale Housing Association, the owner in succession to the former Vale Royal District Council, should ensure the garages are used for parking cars, should provide drives to all their properties for off-street parking where it is feasible, and should mark out the existing parking area on Edgewell Lane so that the spaces can be allocated to their tenants according to need, subject to periodic review, with any surplus made available to the private sector.

2. Elm Tree Court, built in the 1970's as a cul-de-sac of twenty dwellings on smallish plots all with single garages and many with shared drives, has its own specific problems now that many households have at least two cars and shared drives are not suitable for parking. In consequence, there is more roadside and partial pavement parking than was ever intended.



Winterford Lane

Possible solution:

Some residents have created off-road parking in their front gardens and it may be feasible elsewhere to construct private drives to replace shared ones.



3. Eaton Primary School. The present parking and turning provision within the premises was probably about enough for a school of 105 pupils but not when the planned intake rose to 210.

Possible Solution:

Improved arrangements were approved as part of the planning consent for the expansion of the School so it remains to be seen whether or not they are successful.

4. St Thomas' Church. The church has no car park, not a problem for the Sunday Services, but it can be very inconvenient for baptisms, weddings and funerals, and special services such as Harvest Festival, and the Carol Service, although informal arrangements to use the Village Hall car park when not required by their hirers do alleviate the situation.

5. Jessie Hughes Village Hall. The car park can only hold around 20 vehicles, too few for a Hall that can seat 100 people. The well-attended, regular community events and the occasional birthday parties and wedding receptions can lead to uncontrolled parking and traffic congestion on Edgewell and Lower Lanes.

Possible Solution - for both premises:

A public off-street car park close to both the Church and the Hall would be ideal and there is land nearby that could be used subject to agreeing terms with the owners and planning consent, possibly as part of a negotiated permission for residential development.

6. Village Green. On occasion, vehicles park along two sides of the Green which is not ideal owing to the narrow carriageways, and poor visibility at all three junctions.

Solution- None, as off-street parking would be unthinkable on a registered Village Green.

Traffic and Highway Safety

Problems and Objectives.

1. Eaton's lanes and the Parish's long length of the B5152 carry an ever increasing number and size of domestic, commercial, and agricultural vehicles, many moving at higher speeds than are appropriate for their narrow width and their generally uneven and poorly maintained surfaces.

The Parish Council had to fight long and hard to achieve 50, 30 and now 20 mph speed limits within the village and the recently installed speed warning and registration equipment on Eaton Lane will hopefully encourage greater driver awareness approaching the built-up area, especially if prosecutions follow.

The lengths of Lower Lane on the approach to Eaton from Whalley Drive and Winterford Lane entering the village from the south are particularly narrow "pinch points" where pedestrian safety is compromised, especially Lower Lane for parents and schoolchildren living on Whalley Drive.

Unfortunately, the volume of traffic and speeding problems have been exacerbated in recent years by an increase in the number of vehicles using the B5152 as a "rat run" to avoid Tarporley, (and its By-Pass!). Recent census figures show an increase of 20 % in vehicle numbers, partly due to recent housebuilding in Tarporley, Beeston and Bunbury, and the huge expansion of the Wardle Industrial Estate off the A51 at Barbridge will only add to the problem.

Objective: The whole community must continue to support the Parish Council with its ongoing negotiations for a 20mph speed limit on the B5152 together with traffic calming measures in the most dangerous locations.

2. The Weight Restriction Order on the B5152 appears to be unenforceable. In any event, it does not apply to vehicles requiring access, and many drivers claim that particular exemption to reach properties far beyond the Parish. Unfortunately, the large and slow moving horse boxes that use Lower Lane to reach the South View Equestrian Centre at Wettenhall are also exempt.

Objective: The Parish Council should be encouraged to apply for an amendment to the Order to include horse boxes, but if this is not legally possible seek the cooperation of the Equestrian Centre to persuade its visitors to use the main roads to reach their venue, and not the country lanes.



Parking Congestion

3. The sheer number of cars outside the School at dropping off and collection times is a particular problem. Although their movement is supervised, it frequently causes congestion and curtails access to nearby properties as well as the safe passage of through traffic, especially agricultural vehicles.

Objective: The Education Authority's plans for increased on-site parking are intended to eliminate congestion on Lower Lane and improve vehicle circulation within the school premises, but the situation will have to be carefully monitored.

4. The lack of standard raised pavements is a safety hazard for parents and children using Lower Lane to reach the School, and for pedestrians generally throughout the village, notably on the length of the B5152 leading to the Church and the Village Hall.

Objectives: Press for the extension of the raised pavement at the Elm Tree Court /Lower Lane junction as far as the top of Winterford Lane, with a marked crossing point there, to make that walking route to the school safer.

Support the Village Hall Committee in its negotiations to provide a safer access to the Hall from Edgewell Lane along the grass verge outside Royal Farm Mews and encourage St. Thomas' Church to petition for a similar facility from Edgewell Lane to the Church, ideally in the form of raised pavements at both locations. Even if this means widening Royal Lane on the outside of the long bend from the Hall to the Cross, it might be a price worth paying to substantially improve pedestrian safety.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- The management objectives for the countryside, the village design guidelines and the potential solutions for the ongoing infrastructure problems are realistic and achievable through the Parish Council with the support of an active and enthusiastic community at every level of responsibility.
- The Borough Council will also need to play its part in protecting the natural and managed countryside and the Parish's rich building heritage by rigorously enforcing its Countryside policies when considering every residential and other development proposal, particularly in the rural area where past experience has shown it has not always been successful in resisting undesirable applications.
- Although Eaton is categorised as only a local Service Centre under the Local Plan (Part Two) and not a growth village, there are, nevertheless a wide variety of development opportunities where design issues will be extremely important. For instance, there is scope for new housing as infilling, affordable homes on greenfield locations, site clearance and rebuilding to a greater density, extensions to and renovations of existing dwellings to improve their appearance, and further barn conversions.

6.0 APPENDICES.

Appendix I

Relevant CW&CBC Planning Policies.

Local Plan (Part One)

ENV 2---Landscape.

ENV 4---Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

ENV 5---Historic Environment.

See http://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/policies_plans_and_strategies/planningpolicy/local_plan_part_one

Local Plan (Part Two) (draft)

R1---Development in the Rural Area

GBC2---Protection of Landscape

DM3---Design, Character and Visual Amenity

DM44---Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment

DM45---Trees ,Woodland and Hedgerows

DM46-48--Historic Environment Policies

See http://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/policies_plans_and_strategies/planning_policy/local_local_plan_part_two

Appendix II

Listed Buildings – all Grade 2.

Eaton Village

Royal Lane: Baytree House. Church Cottage. Cross and Steps.

Eaton Lane: Eaton Smithy.

Sapling Lane: Hunters Close. The Green. The Old School House. Eaton Cottage.

Lower Lane: Village Well. Silver Birches. Eaton House. Lower House Farm.

Edgewell Lane: Oak Tree Farmhouse. Well House Farm.

Rushton Parish

Beech Lane: Beech Lane Farmhouse. Oulton Mill.

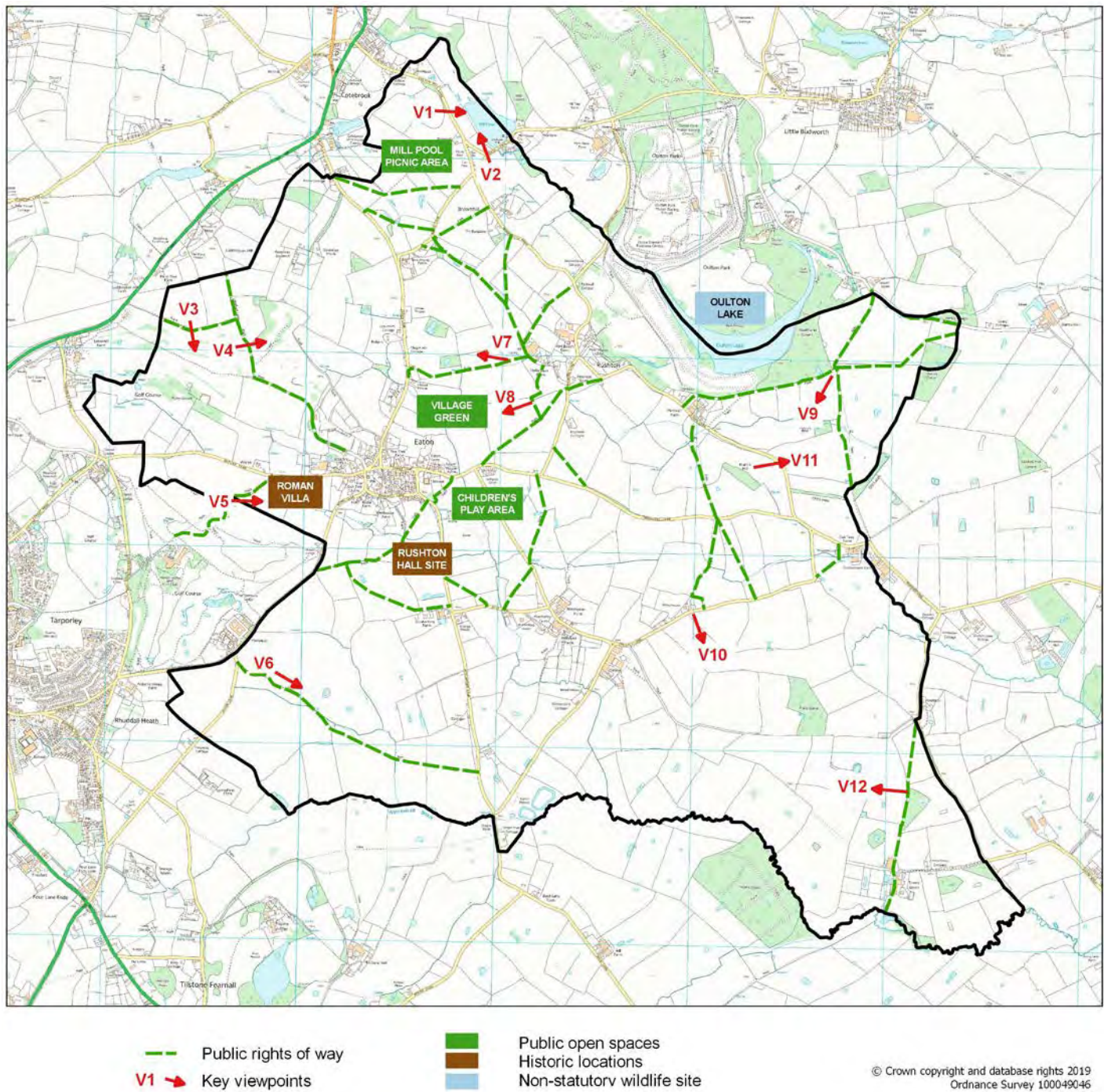
Knickerbrook Lane: Park Gate Farm Cottages.

Dogmore Lane: Park House Parkwall Cottage (Sycamore Bank).

Hickhurst Lane: Oak Tree Farmhouse (Oulton Lowe).

Scheduled Monument: Moated Site and Fishponds 500m SE of Eaton (Rushton Hall).

Appendix III
Map showing Landscape Features, Public Open Spaces and Public Rights of Way with key Viewpoints.



7.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Working Group of

Martin Boardman

David Lilley

Amelia McCourty

Stephen Perry

Michael Scott

David Wood

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Date: May 2019