



Alvechurch Parish Design Statement

A Community Voice for Rural Character

July -2016 Update of the BDC supplementary planning document
"The Alvechurch Village Design Statement" Now renamed:

"THE ALVECHURCH PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT"

Will form part of the :
Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan

NOT FOR GENERAL RELEASE

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Page 9 updated pics needed

Page 35 pic of citroen garage needs updating

Foreword

Ask an architect, a planner and a resident to define good design and there will be three different answers. However, we should respect a comment made recently by a family who had waited for over 10 years to be able to move into a new home where their family had lived for more than a generation, they said “it looks so lovely”.



Continually refining both the design and development process and providing future homes can be complicated. The romantic view of village housing as “thatched cottages with roses round the door” has long been overtaken by “**sustainability**” considerations and the complex requirements placed on the many different departments and bodies involved.

What is **sustainability**? (I like to think it’s the “**ability to cope and endure**”)

The community involved in making this Design Statement want to ensure that homes in our Parish are built to high quality and are sensitive to the local area. This statement aims to meet the needs of local people, create safe and attractive neighbourhoods, whilst limiting environmental impact, and make sure design and materials are appropriate to the rural setting, avoiding inappropriate and sometimes more urban based designs: there is always room for improvement.

Through early involvement with Rural Housing Enablers and Local Authority partners in the development process and through, most importantly, the support and engagement of our local community and the Parish Council this will continue to provide homes that reflect local character. Homes should be well

designed and look attractive, maybe even with roses round the doors!

All those involved in the design and development of rural housing are encouraged to use this guide, produced through close collaboration between planners, highway officers, environment and landscape officers, urban designers, development officers and rural housing enablers. This document was initially conceived in 2004 and has now been updated by current members of the community and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering group that includes some of those who originally conceived the initial **Alvechurch Village Design Statement**.

I believe design and development principles relate well to the earliest surviving work on Architecture, written in the 1st century by Roman architect Vitruvius, freely translated as: Durability – should stand up robustly and remain in good condition, Utility – should be useful and function well and for those using it, Beauty – should delight people and raise their spirits. These principles reflect the vision of current design standards, which is that new housing developments should be attractive, functional and located in sustainable places.

Developments in rural areas like ours must be particularly sensitive to their context and reflect relationships between buildings, spaces, the landscape and other features that are locally distinctive.

This Rural Design Guide is to be read in conjunction with planning, design and housing policies in **firstly the emerging Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan and then in conjunction with Bromsgrove District Council’s Local Plan, the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework and the Worcestershire County Council’s “Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment”**. These plans will give an up-to-date picture of the policies to be applied for a specific site. In addition, there are a number of guidance documents issued by government, which give practical advice on design.

Councillor Adrian Smith
Chairman APNP Steering Group

How to Use this Design Statement

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

If you're in **Local Government**, at County, District or Parish level, involved in **Planning, Highway Design or Highway Maintenance**, or you're an **Architect, a Planning Applicant, a Developer or a Property Owner**, then..... **THIS DESIGN STATEMENT IS FOR YOU.**

First, refer to the **Parish Section**, because it's common to all areas.

Second, refer to the **Village Section, Ward or Hamlet** in which you have a specific interest

If you're in a hurry, make for **"To be encouraged"** at the end of each section

Complementary material that's available via Bromsgrove District Council:

Design Guides for; Agricultural Buildings, Conversion of Rural Buildings, Agricultural Dwellings and Occupancy, Shop fronts, Advertisements and Car Parking Standards

The 1968 "Gedge" Report

As a property owner why not prepare a Character Assessment for your property?

If you are considering changing any external detail of your property, its paintwork, associated signs, garden or surroundings then please consider the factors within this statement, which may help encourage rural character.

Look at the frontage from some distance so as to see it in association with its surroundings, including trees, shrubs and hedges.

Note the most distinguishing features and, separately, those, which seem to be more recent and perhaps out of character.

If necessary, take photographs and consult with friends and neighbours.

Now stand close to the property and note details of the building design itself – its doors windows walls and roofing etc.

Repeat the procedure for each elevation and consider each in relation to the rural character described in this Village Design Statement.

Now think about the changes you propose. Consider whether they might prejudice any of the distinctive characteristics you previously noted. If so, are there any other ways of meeting your requirements but which would conserve the building's heritage?

Where possible, use the opportunity for change to help remove any unwanted and uncharacteristic features.

When looking for guidance to implement Design Statement ideas, your Parish Council can provide assistance and consultation

Thank you for helping to preserve and enhance "Rural Character"

Introduction



The Parish lies in a rural setting, in Green Belt between Birmingham and Redditch Planning Authority

When we make alterations to existing buildings, construct something new or change a planting layout, do we consider how it may affect the rural and historic character? Something seen in another setting or context, which looked good at the time, may be inappropriate in our village.

We are the present guardians of our heritage. It is our responsibility, collectively and individually, to preserve it and to evolve and develop it in an appropriate way.

The material contained within is a statement of what is positive and valued in our community, present and future. There are inevitably examples of design within the Parish that do not fit the character defined, but it's not within the brief of the Alvechurch Parish Design Statement (APDS) to be critical.

The APDS aims to raise the rural and historic character awareness amongst local residents, businesses, planning applicants, highway designers, local planning committees and planning officers.

We need to know how best to take account of what is special about rural character and the local distinctiveness of our buildings and surroundings

This APDS has been gathered via a series of public meetings, workshops and consultation, involving a considerable number of local people. That programme has been co-ordinated by a Steering Group following the Countryside Commission Format.

This finished document was updated to version 1.4 by the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in July 2015. Issued for Planning Guidance and is available to the community and specifically to Planning Applicants on line @ www.alvechurch.gov.uk or via the Local Planning Authority

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The People Who Created the Design Statement

This Design Statement contains the summaries of material collected from each of five Character Workshops in which a broad cross section of the Parish community took part.

The material from the workshops has been supplemented by historical contributions from specialists within the community and other additional content compiled by the Steering Group

The Steering Group members and contributors to the workshops and feedback phases and document preparation are listed below. Without their help, completion of the project would not have been possible.

The following organisations kindly contributed towards the making of the Parish Design Statement
Alvechurch Parish Council, Alvechurch Village Society, Bromsgrove District Council, Shell Better Britain Campaign, Worcestershire County Council, The Countryside Agency (formerly the Countryside Commission), The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, WCC Archaeology Archive Services.



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Jane and Garry Macklin

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SECTION 1 FEATURES COMMON THROUGHOUT THE PARISH

Section 1.1 History

The Parish Map, which forms part of this document, shows the geographic relationship between Alvechurch Village and its Hamlets. All within the Green Belt apart from the centre of Alvechurch Village which is now classified as an urban rural Village, between Birmingham and Redditch.

The land of the Parish was given to the church by Offa, King of Mercia and Overlord of England in 780 AD. It broadly occupies the basin of the River Arrow headwaters. In the twelfth century the Bishop of Worcester selected Alvechurch to enclose a deer park, building a summer palace, fishponds and gardens within it. This is now considered to be a very good example of the recently-recognised concept of “a medieval aesthetically-modified landscape”. The boundaries are still visible as ditches and banks around the major part of its periphery.



A character random height paling fence forming the boundary to Bordesley Deer Park against a backdrop of hills and woodland

The southern boundary of the park is shared with Bordesley Deer Park. The major part of both parks lies within an area designated in the Worcestershire County Structure Plan as

“An Area of Great Landscape Value”

The river played a part in the early development of Alvechurch Village, the Worcester to Coventry road crossing the river near to the Bishop’s Palace. The Church of St Laurence was a centre for population settlement with many medieval houses still visible today. Semi-industrial activities followed, such as grinding of corn and later needle making, employing waterpower necessitating damming of the river.

By the end of the thirteenth century the borough was thriving. The population then suffered badly from the Black Death plague and subsequently economic activity was restricted, becoming largely agricultural when the bishops ceased to use the Palace.



Medieval houses in Alvechurch survive to this day

The use of traditional materials, roof angles and other detailing helps retain original character.

Features Common throughout the Parish

Section 1.2 Landscape Setting and Wildlife

The whole of Alvechurch Parish is designated Green Belt, with the exception of Alvechurch Village which is classed as a rural urban village. The parish has different Landscape Character areas: Principal Timbered Farmland: Wooded Estatelands and Wooded Hills. There are large tracts of open countryside, mostly agricultural, surrounding the Village and its Hamlets, these being of great importance in maintaining the buffer between Birmingham and Redditch. The Parish is set in a landscape of low rolling glaciated hills bisected by the River Arrow and includes the old Bordesley and Alvechurch Parks.



In the foreground, hardly visible, is Hopwood Park Motorway Services and behind it Alvechurch Village – both blend into the landscape within a “bowl” surrounded by hills.

At the Parish Centre, the Village of Alvechurch lies in a bowl within the valley. On the west side, Scarfield Hill and Coopers Hill are on the rim of the bowl with Grovely and Wast Hills to the north. Eastwards lays Swan Hill and Weatheroak. The River Arrow flows out of the bowl through a narrow gap between Newbourne Hill and Cobley Hill towards Redditch in the South. The Church of St.Laurence, dating back to 900 A.D., sits on a hill within the bowl on the south edge of Alvechurch Village.

The Hamlets of Withybed Green, Hopwood, Weatheroak, Rowney Green, and Bordesley are separated from Alvechurch Village by tracts of open countryside; there are also small settlements at Lye Bridge and Forhill and all of these being of great importance in maintaining the Green Belt between Birmingham and Redditch.

The countryside within the Parish is interspersed with; some new woodland planting, old hedgerows, a variety of trees; copses and woodland remnants showing Ancient Woodland characteristics. Peck Wood on the edge of Newbourne Hill between Rowney Green and Alvechurch Village is visible from many parts of the Parish. The hillsides afford spectacular distant views, extending across Warwickshire to the Cotswold Hills and Worcestershire to the Breedon and Malvern Hills.

The Parish comprises a diversity of important wildlife habitats, which support many plant and animal species including some of high conservation concern

To be encouraged in all sections

- More thoughtful detailing when altering and/or extending properties, paying attention, to what is local’
- ‘Maintaining original window proportions/positioning’

Features Common throughout the Parish

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Section 1.3 Settlement Form

The Parish of Alvechurch has several significant transport routes passing through its area.

The M42 bisects the Parish with Hopwood and Weatheroak to the north, and the remaining areas to the south.

The A441 Birmingham to Redditch road runs through the area from north to south, following a by-pass, skirting Alvechurch Village to its east. The by-pass, where it joins the M42, influenced the siting of The Hopwood Park Motorway Service Area.

The Birmingham and Worcester Canal provides a pleasant feature as it runs north to south at the western edge of the Parish. Together with the M42 and the Redditch Spur Railway line it forms a man-made boundary to the settlement. The canal was originally built to transport bulky and heavy materials from Birmingham and beyond but that died out gradually after World War One. More recently it has seen a rebirth as a source of recreation; Alvechurch having its own boat yard offering rental and mooring for narrow boats.

Local brickworks in Alvechurch supplied red bricks for buildings in the area during the period between the mid-19th century and 1939.

There is an extensive network of public rights of way, including public footpaths and bridleways maintained by volunteers from the Alvechurch Village Society. Canal towpaths are available to local people as well as for regional and national visitors. The excellence of the footpath network and its maintenance is referred to in several published guides to walks in Worcestershire and The Midlands.

The pattern of development in the outlying hamlets has been established principally around farming communities although, along with Alvechurch Village, they now form part of the commuter belt serving the West Midlands Conurbation in general and the commercially important centre of Redditch to the south.

The Parish contains many important landmarks and features, for example, at the centre of Alvechurch Village there are historic half-timbered medieval buildings; along the river, there are water meadows with wild flowers and the Old Mill, Radford Road (no longer active as a mill).

Certain developments within the hamlets, and also within the village of Alvechurch itself, benefit from the spectacular views offered by hillside locations.

Each of the outlying hamlets has its own established local communities whilst also having a bond with the wider community of the Parish via the use of pubs, shops, schools and restaurants etc.

Age profile predictions for the Parish in the medium to longer term may lead to increased demand for sheltered accommodation and single person dwellings.

Employment opportunities within the Parish are limited and, in line with the transport policies and environmental concerns, sympathetic commercial developments and building restorations would be appropriate, particularly on existing brown field sites, even if they fall outside existing village envelopes.

Features Common throughout the Parish

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

To be Encouraged Settlement Form

- Open spaces and play areas planted with native species
- Views of open spaces, trees, hedges and hills
- Rural gates, fences and unclipped greenery
- Access to canal towpaths, public footpaths and bridle paths
- Open water provided by the canal, lakes, river and streams
- Agriculture and horticulture
- Any features contributing to rural pursuits
- Barn conversions, small-scale industry and commerce making use of redundant character buildings



Quiet lanes provide the ideal setting for walking, cycling and horse riding



Bittell Lakes create opportunities for sailing and fishing



The Parish is well provided with country pubs



Footpaths across open farmland link each area of the Parish



Horses being ridden along lanes and bridle paths are a common sight



The Parish has many pony paddocks with associated stables –some well-disguised

Open farmland and informal green space including woodland and spinneys between Alvechurch and its surrounding hamlets, particularly on the Rowney Green and Weatheroak side; contribute importantly to the area's rural character and recreational quality. This factor was expressed with enthusiasm at each of the Character Workshops.

**Alvechurch Parish Design Statement
Features Common throughout the Parish**

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

Section 1.4 Buildings

During the course of development of The Parish over the centuries, there have been local sources of timber, sand, gravel, sandstone and clay. These materials influenced building design, colour and character



Red brick terraced cottages at Hopwood



During the 19th and first half of the 20th century, bricks were produced at a sited close to the canal. Red clay dug locally influenced the colour of the bricks, which became a characteristic of properties built during that period.

The outlying hamlets are all characterised to some degree by the type of residential development carried out. Victorian and earlier buildings were built close to the frontage of the lanes and roads. Later development has been set further back and includes a mixture of lawns, hedges, trees and verges. There is little uniformity of building lines and styles but instead, a diversity of character associated with historic periods of development. A mixture of suburban, medieval, Victorian, Georgian and country cottage style housing creates variety in the area.

In recent years, infill and high-density development has led to less land associated with each property.

To be encouraged: Buildings

- Any clusters of high density development within a settlement being small-scale and broken up by generously planted open space
- Building design taking account of the styles identified within the Design Statement
- A random mix of building designs and heights adjacent to each other
- The avoidance of uniform materials and colours for visible elevations of adjacent properties e.g. garage doors
- New properties fitting in with those of established, traditional design or surrounding character incorporating local detailing
- Alvechurch red brick colour, or “pebble dash” render; not “Cotswold”, buff nor concrete-based products
- Refurbished buildings incorporating reclaim-style quality materials and blue brick, to retain originality
- Roof variety, using dormer windows, dentil courses and decorative verges
- Traditional tiled roofs and slate roofs, (not “pan” tiles) with pitch angles of no less than 35 deg. for tiles, 25 deg. for slate
- The avoidance of panel fencing and concrete attachments
- Where privacy and security is necessary, reclaim-style brick walls complete with a frost proof brick or stone header course

Alvechurch Parish Design Statement
Features Common throughout the Parish

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

Section 1.5 Highways and Related Features



The retention of a patchwork of material and informal grass edges associated with footpaths and highways is to be encouraged



Recycled kerbing materials have a mellow appearance whilst remaining functional



Stone setts must be retained and encouraged for use in new schemes where possible



Setting kerbing height below 80mm will improve its appearance



Rough-faced conservation kerbing will mellow faster than the smooth concrete of a standard kerb



Bus shelters with pitched roofs are preferred to flat roofed alternatives

Local "duck" stones can be used as cobbles in small measure associated with paths, highways and drive



To be encouraged

Highways and Related Features

- **The avoidance of additional kerbing** - any necessary new sections should be low level (below 80mm) and either reconstituted stone character or, best option, granite setts
- "Damaged" kerbs repaired by resetting the originals or using **recycled materials** in order to improve function but retain character
- Raised sections of road surfacing material to form a bund preventing **water spillage from the road into properties** in rural lanes without footpaths; not the introduction of kerbing
- The use of appropriate materials with mellow appearance and/or the ability to weather down quickly
- The avoidance of bollards, mini roundabouts and intrusive street lighting
- Non-uniform block paving, **blue brick and/or tarmac**
- **Verges** left to flower and re-seed in early summer: **Over mowing to be discouraged**
- **Narrow footpaths with hedges alongside**

Alvechurch Parish Design Statement

SECTION 2 Features of Alvechurch Village

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Section 2.1 History

Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P5



Alvechurch Village Hall



St Laurence Church

Over many years Alvechurch has enjoyed the benefit of its Village hall, its Baptist Church, Catholic Church and Church of England St Laurence

The advent of the canal, the turnpike and eventually the railway did not result in significant residential development. Historical maps of the village show a slow rate of development up to the beginning of the 20th century; it then accelerated, particularly since 1950. At first, “ribbon” development satisfied the need for residential expansion and later, large areas on the western side of the village were in-filled. Ribbon development began before World War Two but significant expansions began post-1945, and for the most part, post 1960.

Section 2.2.Landscape Setting and Wildlife

Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P6

The oldest part of Alvechurch Village is set amongst mature trees and hedgerows adjacent to the River Arrow and on the adjoining Bear Hill. St Laurence Church commands a prominent position on Bear Hill, surrounded by low-density residential properties and ragged hedgerows containing a variety of wildlife. Most development has taken place on the same side of the river as

Bear Hill. Properties set on the hillside form a major feature and add to the pleasant randomly evolved nature identified during the Alvechurch Character Workshop. Other developments within the valley have a more suburban character but all benefit from views of the adjacent hills and the rich planting of native mature trees and hedgerows forming wild life corridors.



Homes set on slopes benefit from views of the surrounding landscape



Low-density housing at the fringes of the village help it blend with the surrounding landscape



The shopping precinct sits within mature trees when viewed from The Meadows recreation area



Features of Alvechurch Village

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Section 2.3 Settlement Form Population Approx. 2,600 Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P7

Alvechurch Village, at the cross roads of the Worcester to Coventry road and the Birmingham to Pershore Turnpike, is a commercial and social centre. It provides schooling up to age thirteen, has local shops, restaurants and fast food outlets.

There is limited employment in today’s Alvechurch. Many of its residents commute to the neighbouring conurbations of Redditch and Birmingham, with the adjacent M42 motorway providing easy access to a wider area.

The Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields (“The Meadows”), Crown Meadow, George Road

Playing Field and the School Playing Fields are the significant publically accessible open spaces within the village.

Smaller less formal open spaces have gradually been in-filled, making those that remain valuable assets not only as informal play areas, but also as oases for wildlife.

Despite the urban-style development, which has taken place in blocks between 1950 and the present, many parts of the village retain a rural character and there is a strong community spirit, often fostered by rural activity.



The use of the canal should be encouraged; it forms a natural boundary but is also a recreational amenity and a contributor to the commercial economy.



The character of the network of walks linking different parts of the village, with its associated trees and hedges, should be maintained.



The adjacency of the countryside and footpath access to agricultural land is important.

Much of the housing in the Conservation Area in the centre of Alvechurch is small character properties. Future changes to the village must meet the needs of a changing society through consideration and regard to **this Design Statement and the WCC Alvechurch Historic Environment Resource Assessment.**



Shop fronts and their signs in keeping with the character of the buildings they occupy are to be encouraged



Features of Alvechurch Village

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To be encouraged Settlement Form

- Environmental impact assessments, made before allowing further development of open spaces
 - Strengthening of rural character to be a focus for the future
 - Convenience of use of the railway station, upgraded to 2 platforms in 2015
 - Canal and boating facilities within convenient walking distance of the village centre
 - The convenient use of the canal; it forms a natural boundary but is also a recreational amenity and a contributor to the commercial economy
 - The character of the network of walks, with its associated trees and hedges, linking different parts of the village, e.g. through the churchyard and its surroundings
 - Streams open, not piped in
 - Maintenance of hedges in a manner sensitive to wildlife
 - Planting of native species trees and hedges for succession
 - The harmonious mix of recreational, residential and commercial activity within the village
 - Character landmarks, e.g. Humpback bridges, The Square and major trees such as on the Redditch Road approach, the large beech tree forming a natural archway into the village
 - The adjacency of the countryside and footpath access to agricultural land
 - Introduction of more rural character design into areas where it is lacking, e.g. to residential estates and the shopping precinct and its associated square
 - Plot sizes should follow what is typical of the immediate vicinity'
 - Shop fronts and their signs, in character with the buildings they occupy
 - Spaciousness of existing recreation sites associated with native species planting
 - The Village Car Park recycling area which is well hidden and functional to be kept clean
- A clean and well maintained village

Features of Alvechurch Village

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Section 2.4. Buildings

Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P9



New buildings in local brick colour are in keeping



The predominant mix of building character in the Conservation Area of Swan Street, Red Lion Street, Bear Hill is Elizabethan, Victorian and Georgian. Other parts of the village could be encouraged to follow those themes where appropriate



Building lines back from the road allow space for full size trees to grow without damage to properties or the significant exclusion of light



Some late 20th century developments have adopted elements of traditional detail design, brick colour and roof angles. Attention needs to be given to building layout, variety in height and planting of native trees



Mill Court is an excellent example of modern development in keeping with old industrial heritage



Brookside is a good example of mature planting within a development



Adopt roof pitch angles of no less than 35 deg. for tiles, 25 deg. for slate

Features of Alvechurch Village

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

To be encouraged

Buildings

- Informal, random layout and random height of buildings
- New properties blending in with those of established design
- Local-colour red brick, as opposed to buff or “Cotswold”
- The predominant mix of building character in the Conservation Area of Swan Street, Red Lion Street, and Bear Hill is Elizabethan, Victorian and Georgian. Other parts of the village could be encouraged to follow the same themes where appropriate but a pastiche of half-timbered buildings is considered inappropriate
- Refurbished buildings incorporating good quality reclaim-style materials or modern equivalent and blue bricks, to help retain originality
- Generous planting such as found in the Brookside development
- Clever use of the contours of the land such as in the “Buckleys” development
- Small house designs softened by the planting of trees and hedges
- Spaciousness of layout and set-back building lines can be mixed with small clusters of higher density buildings as per Meadow Lane but must be associated with adjacent open space and planting
- Variation in roof lines including the use of dormers, dentil courses, decorative verges and gable ends
- Incorporation of traditional tiled and slate roofs, (not “pan” tiles) or modern equivalent
- Pitch angles of no less than 35 deg. for tiles, 25 deg. for slate
- Subtle changes in levels, creating variety
- Appealing rooflines and roof character viewed from outside the development
- Retention and further planting of native species trees and hedgerows to disguise the severity of new buildings
- Self-sustainable planting schemes within shopping areas
- Rural-type gates and rustic non-panel fencing without visible concrete attachments
- Where privacy and security is necessary, the use of a reclaim-style brick wall with a blue brick header course
- Residential road edges free from urban kerbing – no kerbing at all if possible.
- Gravel, crushed stone, random-sized block or tarmac driveways which weather down to become mellow
- Walks and cycle ways fringed with rural greenery linking various sections of development
- Business and shop front and design with a “traditional village” character

Features of Alvechurch Village

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Section 2.5 Highways and Related Features

Refer also to Features Common Throughout

Parish – P10



Hoop- top fencing introduced into a part of the village previously devoid of “conservation” street furniture



Good design public seating in a non-manicured setting



Roadside parking can be an advantageous means of traffic calming whilst contributing to passing trade for shops



The canal forming part of the Alvechurch Village boundary is a valuable cycle way and footpath leading in and out of the area



Should lamp standards need to be replaced, heritage-type designs are preferred or good quality equivalent



Victorian paving bricks, conservation kerbing, grey or brindle “drivesett” blocks, stone setts, cobbles and tarmac are preferred materials than that of modern day block-paving



Features of Alvechurch Village

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

To be encouraged

Highways and Related Features

- All highways signage where practical including canals/motorway and rail should be highlighted as leading to Alvechurch as being a “Gateway to the Countryside”
- Footpaths, made from asphalt, mellowed over a period of time, with vegetation at the fringes
- Victorian paving bricks, grey or brindle “drivesett” blocks, stone setts, cobbles and tarmac for highway-associated construction (red or buff brick-sized block paving is to be avoided)
- The avoidance of high concrete kerbs (height below 80mm)
- Low-level, stone-character conservation kerbs
- The highway within the built up area specifically designed for servicing village businesses and homes, thus encouraging through traffic to use the bypass
- Service roads with mature hedges and trees reducing traffic noise from the main highway
- Edges of roads and paths left uncut in spring and early summer
- Character narrow roads and lanes coming into the centre of the village
- The importance of informal road and footpath edges, unclipped hedges and trees, fundamental to rural character as identified in each of the Character Workshops

Traffic Calming Measures including for the whole parish

To be encouraged if their visual appearance takes account of rural character

- Their appearance must not be urban
- Coloured road surfaces and the use of bright colours should be kept to a minimum
- “Gateways signs” to the Village centre must be specifically designed to reflect local character
- Designs should eliminate the need for high-profile concrete kerbs
- The use of illuminated bollards should be avoided where possible
- Low-level “moulded” roundabouts with a mock brick appearance are a better visual alternative than mini roundabouts with kerbs, bollards, lighting and signs
- Lighting, visible away from the area intended to be lit is inappropriate
- Lamps should be “white light” not sodium vapour and should be shrouded
- Any necessary lighting supports should be in keeping with the village hoop-top fencing character
- Parking provision can be an advantageous means of traffic calming whilst also contributing to passing trade for shops

SECTION 3 Features of Withybed Green

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

Section 3.1 History Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P5

The development of Withybed Green was initiated during the 18th century by the building of the canal, and continues to be influenced by it, attracting a steady tourist trade particularly during the holiday season.

Section 3.2 Landscape Setting and Wildlife Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P6

It lies west of Alvechurch at the foot of Scarfield and Coopers Hills and is separated from the housing of Alvechurch Village by the canal and single-track railway line. Withybed's canal, brooks and small woodland copses in its hilly agricultural setting are a stable environment for a diversity of plants and wildlife.

Section 3.3. Settlement Form Population approx. 100 Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P7



The compact and unspoilt hamlet of Withybed Green, contributes greatly to Parish recreation, via its access to footpaths across farmland. The “country pub” Crown Inn provides a focus for the community as well as food and drink for locals and visitors alike.

The mix of character terraced cottages and detached properties have attracted a broad age band of residents who, whilst taking part in Alvechurch activities as a whole, identify with Withybed Green's unique community and character.

The hamlet of Withybed Green is identified by Worcestershire's Villages survey as a special character area

Features of Withybed Green

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Section 3.4 Buildings Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P9



Most 19th century with some 18th, built in response to the commercial activity associated with the canal, agriculture and brickworks.

Section 3.4 Highways and Related Features Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P10



To be encouraged

- More thoughtful detailing when altering and/or extending properties, paying attention to what is local'
- 'Maintaining original window proportions/positioning'
- The retention of unspoilt landscape around Withybed Green
- Canal-side development, only of existing buildings or in small scale, adjacent to them, whether residential or commercial, incorporating boating facilities, helping to consolidate present character and acting as a link with Withybed's historical background
- Any new or alteration building work, architecturally in keeping with the best of existing character
- Ample self-contained parking associated with any building alteration or development schemes
- An absence of kerbing, signage and street lighting. Apart for reasons of security and safety.

SECTION 4: Features of Rowney Green

Section 4.1 History Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P5

Rowney Green

The main area of population (A Ribbon Development)

Comprising mainly large detached properties, this settlement, whilst it had its origins in farming during the 18th century plus some gravel extraction, has become a ribbon development, most of which was constructed post 1950. The Landscape Character of the area comprises: Wooded Estatelands, Wooded Hills / Ancient Woodland (Peck Wood), some added modern woodland (Newbourne wood) and open land with low density of settlement.

The Seecham Area

This is a small community half a mile from the main village hall, identified through its listed property of Seecham Manor that dates back to medieval times. Longfield Manor and Rowney Green House Farm are also listed properties in what is one of the oldest parts of Rowney Green.

Lower Rowney Green

Originally comprising cottages built on The Bishop of Worcester’s land during 17th and 18th centuries, this compact community identifies to this day with its “unspoilt”; quiet “hidden valley” and smallholding agriculture of the past.

Section 4.2 Landscape Setting and Wildlife Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P6



The spaciousness within the development, including mature native trees and hedges, forms a major part of Rowney Green’s rural character



The traditional design of recently constructed stables blends into the mature landscape



Unrestricted rural landscape views from Chapel Lane providing good walks and recreational amenity for villagers and visitors

The settlement, with each of its three sub-sections, is spread over approximately one square mile and situated about a mile south east of Alvechurch Village, separated by farmland, the Alvechurch bypass and the slopes of Newbourne Hill. Each of the three sub-sections has subtly different landscape character. To the northern side of Newbourne Hill, close to the motorway, lies Seecham agricultural and equine community. The ribbon development of Rowney Green lies on the Eastern side of Newbourne Hill and Lower Rowney Green lies in a small adjacent valley.

Under the present District Plan policy the whole of Rowney Green is designated as a “Village Envelope” area.

Extensive areas of bracken and bluebell woods are an added bonus. There are large pockets of uncultivated spinney and woodland as well as ancient grassland. The spring-fed stream of Lower Rowney Green contains water, filtered through the adjacent sand and gravel hilltop. The whole Rowney Green area is a haven for a rich variety of wildlife.

Section 4.3 Settlement Form Population _Approx. 520 Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P7



Access to footpaths and bridle paths from within the village ensures that all residents and visitors can enjoy the benefit of the landscape and farmland



Stables, where possible, should be set down into the landscape or amongst trees



Pretty country lanes without through traffic are ideal for walking and horse riding

With no shop, nor pub, The Village Hall (formerly called The Peace Memorial Hall) provides a focal point for village social life with a “one day” pub “The Goat and Trousers” being held there on Friday evenings.

Good community spirit is promoted by societies and individuals using the hall. There is a children’s play area, tennis courts and playing fields to the rear of the hall maintained by the Parish Council

With the nearest school and shops three miles away in Alvechurch Village, and with only limited public transport, households rely heavily on private cars. On the fringe of the village development, to the south, is Bordesley Hall, hidden behind woodland, within a fold of the hill. Split into small industrial and commercial units, it provides local employment. Peck wood, also on the south side of the settlement, contains an outdoor pursuit centre. Visitors to the centre make extensive use of public footpaths and bridleways within the immediate area.

The Rowney Green Lane ribbon development forms the major part of the settlement, containing approximately 90 dwellings.

The Village Hall and playing fields. The playing fields and associated tennis courts are maintained by the Parish Council.

Many of the houses were built to maximise on the spectacular views to the north and east.

Seecham is mainly an agricultural area containing only a limited number of properties, but includes a long-established riding school.

Lower Rowney Green, characterised by the “loop” formed by Gravel Pit Lane and Chapel Lane, provides a recreational walk into open countryside comprising fields, woodland and spinneys. It is a community that’s spread out with a “time warp” character, made possible by strict application of green belt policy with little infill development. The “cottage” community has around it a mixture of smallholdings and pony paddocks.

Features of Rowney Green

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Section 4.4 Buildings

Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P9



A, recently built, traditional design cottage. Retention of the mature hedge is good practice



Sympathetic barn conversions also form part of the Seecham Area character.



A recently-built garage, making good use of reclaimed bricks, slate roof and wooden window frames, to blend with the original cottage



Retention and additional planting of native species of hedgerow and trees can help soften new properties



Holly trees and hawthorn hedges, allowed to grow to large scale - the houses behind them are set back substantially from the road



Residential development partly hidden behind mature native hedges and trees is a typical of Rowney Green character



Buildings, set within a spacious plot have room for substantial adjacent planting helping blend them into their rural surroundings



Rowney Green, like other hamlets within the Parish, has a small development of well-designed houses, originally council-owned



When altering or renovating old properties, the use of traditional materials and roof angles and other detailing helps retain original character

Features of Rowney Green

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Section 4.5 Highways and Related Features

Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P10



Where a footpath is necessary, the informal look of low-level mellow kerbing provides a better rural feel than urban-type kerbing.



Un-adopted narrow access lanes with their associated trees and hedges are a pleasant Rowney Green feature



Informal openings to driveways, as opposed to hard paved surfaces and concrete edging, are good practice

An absence of kerbing, signage and street lighting is preferred. Should it be necessary for certain safety or functional reasons, it should be of a non-urban style.



- Access to footpaths and bridle paths within the village enabling residents and visitors to enjoy the benefit of landscape and farmland
- Application of Green Belt Policy with no infill development ensuring the on-going recreational quality of Seecham and Lower Rowney Green
- Stables and other livestock-related facilities, where possible, blending into the landscape or set amongst trees
- Spaciousness within the development, including mature native trees and hedges, forming a major part of Rowney Green's rural character
- Small Industry and commerce, in harmony with rural character
- The use of traditional and reclaim-type materials
- When altering or renovating old properties, the use of original *roof angles, window opening proportions and styles, and other detailing* helping to retain character
- Where possible, at the time of new building, the retention of existing native hedges and trees or, if that's impractical, planting of replacements
- Informal openings and thresholds to driveways, as opposed to hard paved surfaces and/or concrete edging

SECTION 5: Features of Hopwood

Section 5.1 History Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P5 Page 24

Hopwood forms the largest land area within the Parish; most of it agricultural with a low population density. Scattered individual properties date back to 17th century but most of the housing has been built during the 20th century, close to the A441.

Section 5.2 Landscape Setting and Wildlife Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P6

Hopwood lies to the north of Alvechurch, on the slopes of Grovely Wood and adjoins in part the Birmingham conurbation boundary. Large areas of open countryside surround the remainder. Hopwood Dingle, between Hopwood and the

Birmingham Boundary is an important conservation area with SSSI status. Bittell Lakes, one of which is a feeder for the Birmingham and Worcester Canal, and the others previously for River Arrow-related industry, are to be found on the West side of the hamlet.



The majority of Hopwood settlement sits on the side of a hill, from the top of which there are impressive views over large areas of open countryside

Section 5.3 Settlement Form Population approx. 650 Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P7

The Hopwood Park Motorway Service Area, at the junction of the M42 and the A441, is a significant development. Its planning consent fell outside the domain of The District Council. However, they did influence the creation of an associated nature park.

It is well sited in a valley, hidden from local residential developments, providing employment opportunities. Where National Government takes precedent over the Local Planning Authority, the PDS (Parish Design Statement), if acted upon, could help soften the impact of a development.



At Hopwood Park Motorway Services, surface water drainage, including provision for oil and fuel spillage, has been catered for by a natural reed bed filtration system. The floating ornamental fountain shown in the photograph aerates the water as part of the overall system, designed to protect the environment

Features of Hopwood

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

Settlement Form continued



Canal feeder lakes provide opportunities for wildlife observation, fishing and boating in addition to enhancing views across a spacious, open landscape.



The Peacock is a "country pub" within one mile of the Birmingham City boundary

The Hopwood settlement is well served for recreation facilities. It has two pubs, a hotel, a village Hall, a community centre and playing fields, two rugby clubs, a cricket club, a sailing club, fishing lakes and canal. Part of the North Worcestershire Path runs through Hopwood.

It is the largest land area Ward within Alvechurch Parish but has the lowest population density. It is also the closest ward to the Birmingham City boundary. The level of recreation on offer is an amenity for the adjacent urban population as well as for local people.

Successive Planners have maintained a building moratorium and encouraged agriculture. It is important to maintain defences against creeping urbanisation in the future if the spaciousness of Hopwood is to be retained.

Hopwood residential development is mainly distributed along a one-mile section of the A441 and the lanes leading from it along with an affordable development of 20 houses off Ash lane. There is also a mobile home park at which approximately 16% of the population reside.

The volume of traffic now using the A441 is increasing considerably due to the Birmingham Longbridge development scheme that is replacing the old Austin motor works.

Traffic safety, calming measures and the provision of some crossing facility is urgently required on this downhill section of what has rapidly become a major urban feeder road for the M42 motorway.

The M42 Motorway crosses Hopwood in an east-west direction and separates the hamlet from the rest of the Parish.



Working farms, a welcome sight along the back lanes of Hopwood, are to be encouraged in their efforts to protect the environment



On the canal, commercial transport has given way to recreational use, generating local employment



A number of large houses have been preserved by conversion to residential care and nursing homes

Features of Hopwood

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Section 5.4 Buildings

Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P9 Page 26

Most of the properties in Hopwood were built pre-1950 apart from; the recently built 2010 Woodpecker Close, a mobile home park and the rest of recent building work confined to barn conversions. It has neither church, nor school, but instead, a Village Hall and Community Centre are a focus for community use.

Some of the older houses along the A441 were built end-on to the road, so that their front and back faced north and south.



Smedley Crooke Place; A well designed small development and associated planting



This three-storey farmhouse is a local feature common also to other parts of The Parish



Overhanging eaves, inset dormer windows and decorative gable ends, are a local characteristic

Section 5.5 Highways and Related Features

Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish

The absence of kerbing, signage and street lighting is preferred. Should it be necessary for certain safety or functional reasons, it should be of a non-urban style.



Where the ribbon development along the main road is set back on a service road, trees and hedgerow help to blend it in with its surroundings



A quiet unsurfaced, access lane off the main A441 makes a welcome contrast to the noise and busyness of the adjacent road



The A441 Birmingham to Redditch Road carries a large amount of traffic, connecting South Birmingham with the M42



Features of Hopwood

To be encouraged

- Defence against creeping urbanisation to retain the spaciousness of Hopwood and protect the rest of the Parish from encroachment from Birmingham and Redditch
- Where National Government takes precedent over the Local Planning Authority, implementation of the Parish Design Statement could help to soften the impact of development
- Encouraging the efforts by Working farms, a welcome sight along the back lanes of Hopwood, to prosper and protect the environment
- Canal-side development, whether residential or commercial, incorporating boating facilities and consolidating Hopwood's present character
- The change of use of residential properties into suitable commercial activities, incorporating their restoration to original character
- Self-contained parking provided for in any building alteration or development schemes
- The absence of kerbing, signage and intrusive street lighting. Should it be necessary for certain safety or functional reasons, it should be of a non-urban style
- The retention of the current hamlet curtilage to prevent precedence by not allowing sprawl into the Green Belt and by limiting development to infilling only apart from very local survey proven need.

SECTION 6 FEATURES OF BORDESLEY

Section 6.1 History

Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P5

The community, developed largely during the 20th century, retains an independence from its close neighbour, the Borough of Redditch. Its rural character relies largely upon its setting within farmland and its uninterrupted views of surrounding hills.

Section 6.2 Landscape Setting and Wildlife

Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P6

Extensive views of the surrounding hills and open farmland are Bordesley's most significant landscape feature.



Many homes enjoy interrupted views across farmland to the rear.



A relic of Bordesley Park Boundary, this random-paling stock fence illustrates hand-made rural character which could be replicated with today's rustic fencing materials



Access to the open countryside is limited to one public footpath

Section 6.3 Settlement Form

Population approx. 230 Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P7

Bordesley is a ribbon development along the A441 approach road to Redditch and the B4101 Redditch to Beoley Road, about three miles south of Alvechurch Village; there is no church, nor village hall.

The Meadow Farm public house and the petrol filling station, located close to the intersection of the two roads, provide a focal point.

The heavy levels of traffic along the A441 means there is little recreational outlook from the front of the houses.

Features of Bordesley

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Section 6.4 Settlement Form continued



Service station plus car sales and service facility provides potential for employment and convenience shopping but takes no account of rural character



A wholesale horticultural nursery is an appropriate commercial activity hidden from the road and providing potential for local employment



Ample unclipped verges with large mature trees and hedges result from low-density development

Section 6.5. Buildings

Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P9

Houses are predominately mid-20th century, with some more recent infilling



Sufficiently large plot sizes allowing large trees and unclipped hedges to co-exist with buildings, helping them to blend with the rural sett

Section



Section 6.6 Highways and Related Features

Parish – P10

Refer also to Features Common throughout

To be encouraged

- **An absence of kerbing**, signage and street lighting. Should it be necessary for safety or functional reasons, it would be of a non-urban style
- Factors covered within the VDS implemented to help prevent the oncoming of creeping urbanisation
- **Ample off-road parking**, enabling vehicles to turn around and re-enter the main road in relative safety

SECTION 7 FEATURES OF WEATHEROAK

Section 7.1 History

Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P5 Page 30

The settlement of Weatheroak, dating back to Roman times, began at the cross roads of the Roman road Ricknild Street (now called Icknield Street) and the Worcester to Coventry road.

Properties range from the 14th to 19th century with one or two 20th century examples only.

The majority were built in association with agriculture and for the estate workers of Weatheroak Hall, now the clubhouse of a Golf Club.

The former owners of the hall (The Mynors) built several of the cottages at Weatheroak in the early 1800s to house staff.

The designer was thought to be W.H.Bidlake, a well-known architect of that time, who also designed the local St. Mary's Church tower. Weatheroak Hall design probably influenced these cottages since there are similarities between the buildings. Weatheroak Hall itself, together with the golf course, falls outside Alvechurch Parish, in the Parish of Wythall.

Section 7.2. Landscape Setting and Wildlife Refer also to Features Common Throughout Parish – P6

The Weatheroak settlement blends into the natural landscape. The pattern of agricultural development is sympathetic to it and defined by it.

The compact and sparsely developed hamlet lies three miles east of Alvechurch Village, centred on Weatheroak Hill. Gently sloping grazing land, a wealth of hedgerows and specimen trees are characteristic of the area.



Highly visible features on the skyline such as tall trees, the windmill and woodland, visible from some miles away, give the settlement a positive sense of identity



Section 7.3 Settlement Form Population approx. 80 Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish –

There is no village hall, nor shop, but the Coach and Horses Public House provide a focal point for the community. People employed in nearby conurbations occupy most of the residential properties.

The golf club, (once Weatheroak Hall and once the local landlord) attracts many hundreds of people into the area to either play golf or attend social functions.

Alvechurch Parish Design Statement

Features of Weatheroak

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

Settlement Form continued



Coach and Horses public house, has a traditional walk-in entrance from the road. It has been extended but the “original pub” character has been cleverly retained

An existing character building, previously used as a store for the public house, appropriately converted for commercial use as a micro brewery

Local farming flanked by abundance of hedge rows and Giant Redwoods in Alvechurch seen from Weatheroak in Watery Lane



Active conventional dairy and sheep farming, complete with farmyard smells, adds true rural character to the settlement, close to the public house



Icknield Street is a single track low traffic usage lane providing a good recreational opportunity for walkers, horse riders and cyclists



The wall-mounted post box opposite the Coach and Horses pub at the Icknield Street crossroads is a strong man-made landmark.

Section 7.4 Buildings

Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P9

A small number are converted agricultural buildings. The Bourneville Trust, which owned and maintained substantial amounts of land and property in and around Weatheroak during the 20th century, has had a stabilising effect on development.

Weatheroak building character has been affected only in a small way by late 20th century development and contains fine examples of architecture dating back to 14th century. Good building design detail linking a number of residential, agricultural and commercial properties within the settlement is also to be found in places elsewhere within the Parish.

Alvechurch Parish Design Statement

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Buildings continued



Informal boundaries created by hedges and loose stone driveways without kerbing



Steep roof angles, windows with leaded lights, ornate chimneys, stone architraves all practical to build with today's materials



Decorative barge boards on gable ends and local Alvechurch-character red brick



A local landmark, this listed property has had a recent porch addition in keeping with the original building's character



Examples of recent building additions in keeping with original character



Section 7.5 Highways and Related Features Refer also to Features Common throughout Parish – P10



An absence of kerbing, signage and street lighting is preferred. Should installation be necessary for certain safety or functional reasons, it should be a non-urban style.

The absence of road markings and kerbing on country lanes may encourage lower speeds of through traffic unfamiliar with the route.

Features of Weatheroak

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To be encouraged

- Tall native trees planted on the top of the hill as landmarks for the benefit of future generations
- Continued planting of woodland saplings as has happened during the past 15 years on several acres of agricultural land between Brockhill and Icknield Street
- Any development, should it be necessary, reflecting historic building character and continuing agricultural land use.
- Converted agricultural buildings should not be extended beyond their original size
- Suitable commercial activity, e.g. Weatheroak Brewery associated with the Coach and Horses is a good use of existing buildings
- Working farms having a positive influence on rural character
- Hedges, forming boundaries; an important character element and encouragement to wildlife
- Attractive recreational rural locations. The pub and picnic points continuing to attract walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and motorists from the local area and the neighbouring conurbations of Birmingham and Redditch
- Strong man-made landmarks e.g. the red brick windmill and the wall-mounted post boxes
- Support for continuity of the existing policy of major land and property owners,
- The Bourneville Trust, which, during the 20th century, has had a stabilising effect on development
- An absence of kerbing, signage and intrusive street lighting. Should it be necessary for safety or functional reasons, it must be of a non-urban style

Alvechurch Parish Design Statement

SECTION 8: Examples of Detail Design from within the Parish

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Doors and Porches

Individually made joinery doesn't automatically cost more than off-the-peg items but enables owners to maintain their properties in keeping with traditional character. There are local contractors able to supply your needs: **for advice Contact the VDS team via your**

Parish Council: 0121 447 8016

U-PVC doors and windows are inappropriate in listed properties and The Conservation Area in general, and listed building consent is required to change windows and doors in listed buildings.

Here are some examples of historic doors and some modern equivalents which may be appropriate, depending on the age and style of your property.'

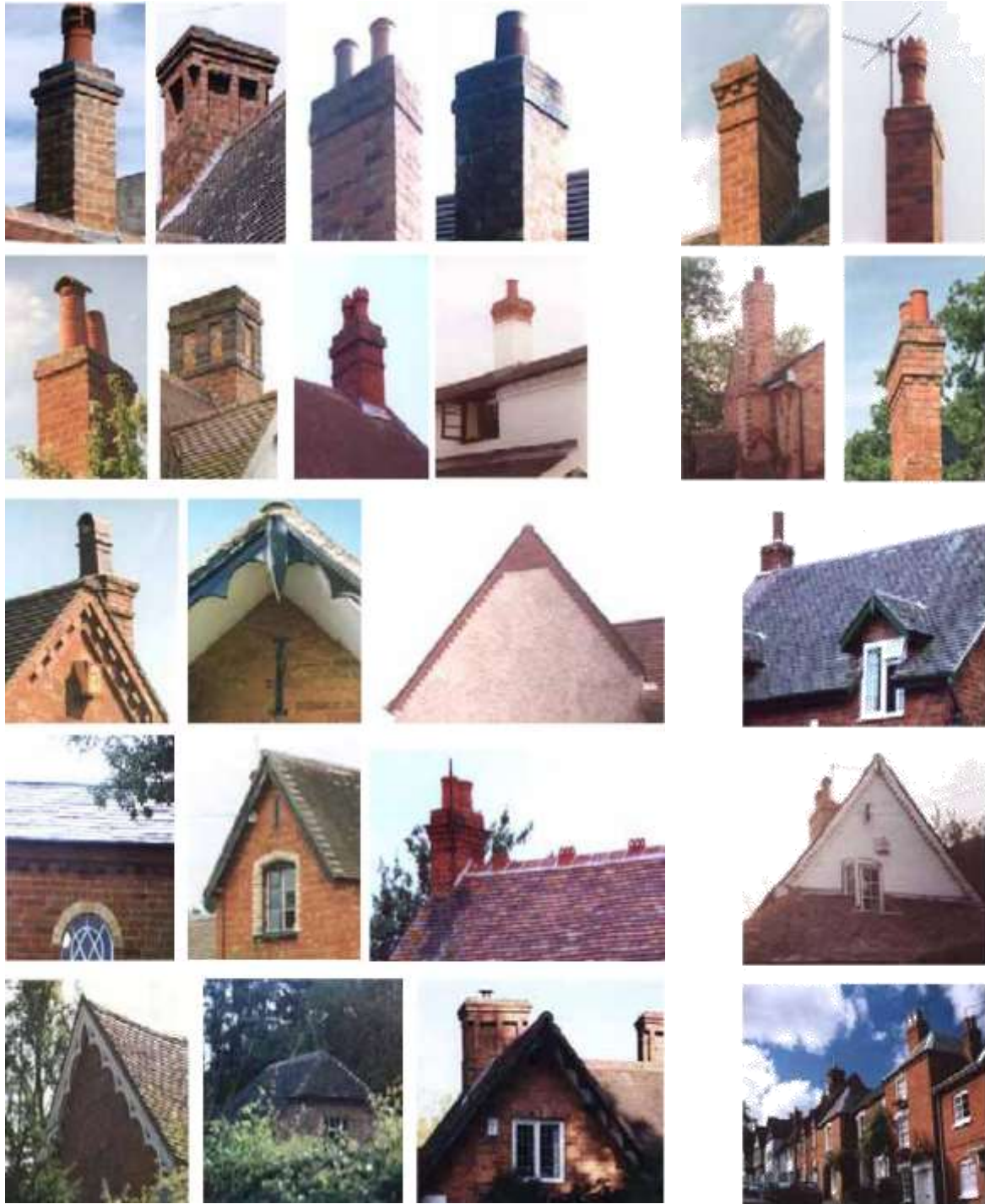
Incorporate designs like these in your property



Examples of Detail Design from within the Parish

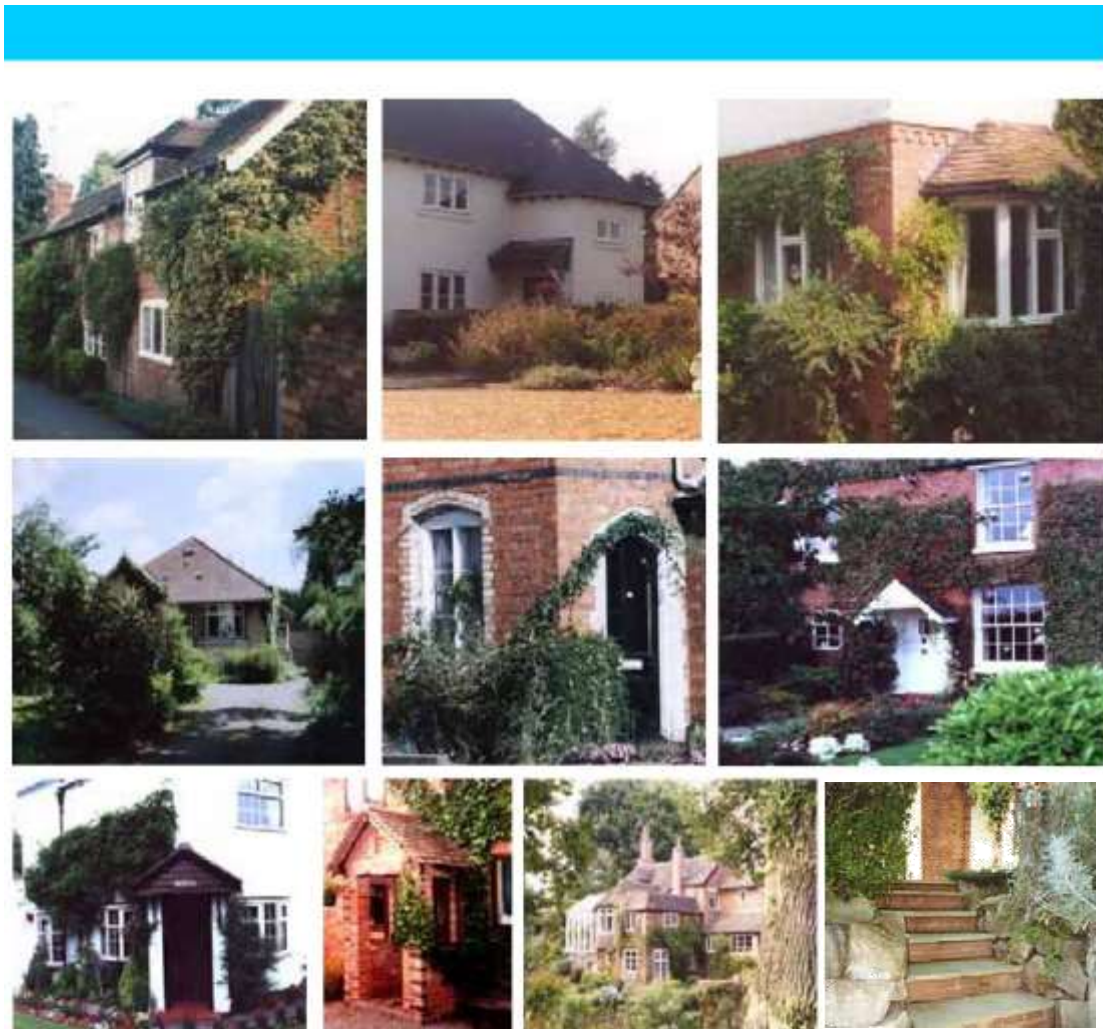
www.alvechurch.gov.uk

Chimneys and Roofs: Not all the details illustrated are suitable for every property, for example the Victorian bargeboards in the photograph in the bottom left hand corner would not be appropriate on a vernacular cottage.



**Examples of Detail Design from within the Parish
Planting to Soften the Appearance of Buildings**

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Examples of Native Species Suitable for Large and Small Scale Applications

Large Trees	Field Maple (<i>acer campestre</i>), Beech (<i>fagus sylvatica</i>), English Oak (<i>quercus rober</i>), Silver Birch (<i>betula pendula</i>)
Small Trees	Crab Apple (<i>malus</i>), Hawthorn (<i>crataegus monogyna</i>), Cherry (<i>prunus</i>), Mountain Ash/Rowan (<i>sorbus aucuparia</i>)
Hedging	Whips from native trees, as listed above, planted in late autumn, make a cheap native hedge Also planted as whips: Blackthorne, Hazel, Hornbeam Pot-grown shrubs planted autumn or early spring – Holly, Wild Rose (<i>rosa rugosa</i>), Viburnum Opulus
Climbers	Ivy (<i>hedera helix</i>), Honey Suckle (<i>lonicera</i>)

The above are few examples of suitable planting; your Parish Council can provide further assistance and consultation via local specialist within the community

Examples of Detail Design from within the Parish

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Boundaries



Chestnut fencing
Clipped Hedges
Picket fencing
Natural colours
Random height palings
Woven wattle



Combined fencing and hedging
Blue brick capping



Natural unclipped verges
Reclaim brick walls and edging
Five-bar gates
Rustic post and rail

