

Introduction

This Village Design Statement (VDS) describes the character of the local area identifying what is special and distinctive about our village. It aims to ensure that any future changes in the parish take into account local knowledge and ideas and protect and enhance the special nature of the village.

Scope

The area covered by the VDS is the whole parish of Great Wolford, shown in Map 1. It includes the built environment of the village of Great Wolford and Nethercote.

Purpose

The Village Design Statement is a tool for empowering the residents of Great Wolford to affect the future of their village and parish. It reflects the views of the community concerning the conservation and enhancement of the character of their environment. It formulates guidelines which are the key messages of the VDS.



View from the crossroads opposite The Green, looking towards the Todenham road out of the village.

Community Involvement

Community involvement has been essential in the framing of the design statement, in order to build a complete picture of what the people who live in the Parish think, and what they want for the Parish. A questionnaire was distributed to every household, with a copy for every adult. Where there were older children in a household they were also encouraged to express their views. From an electoral roll of 153 and 86 households, we received 121 completed questionnaires, a very high response rate. The results of the survey were posted on the Parish Council website. Subsequently a village meeting, attended by over 30 residents, was held to discuss the results and seek further views. In addition, both these formal consultations engendered informal discussion among residents.

Status

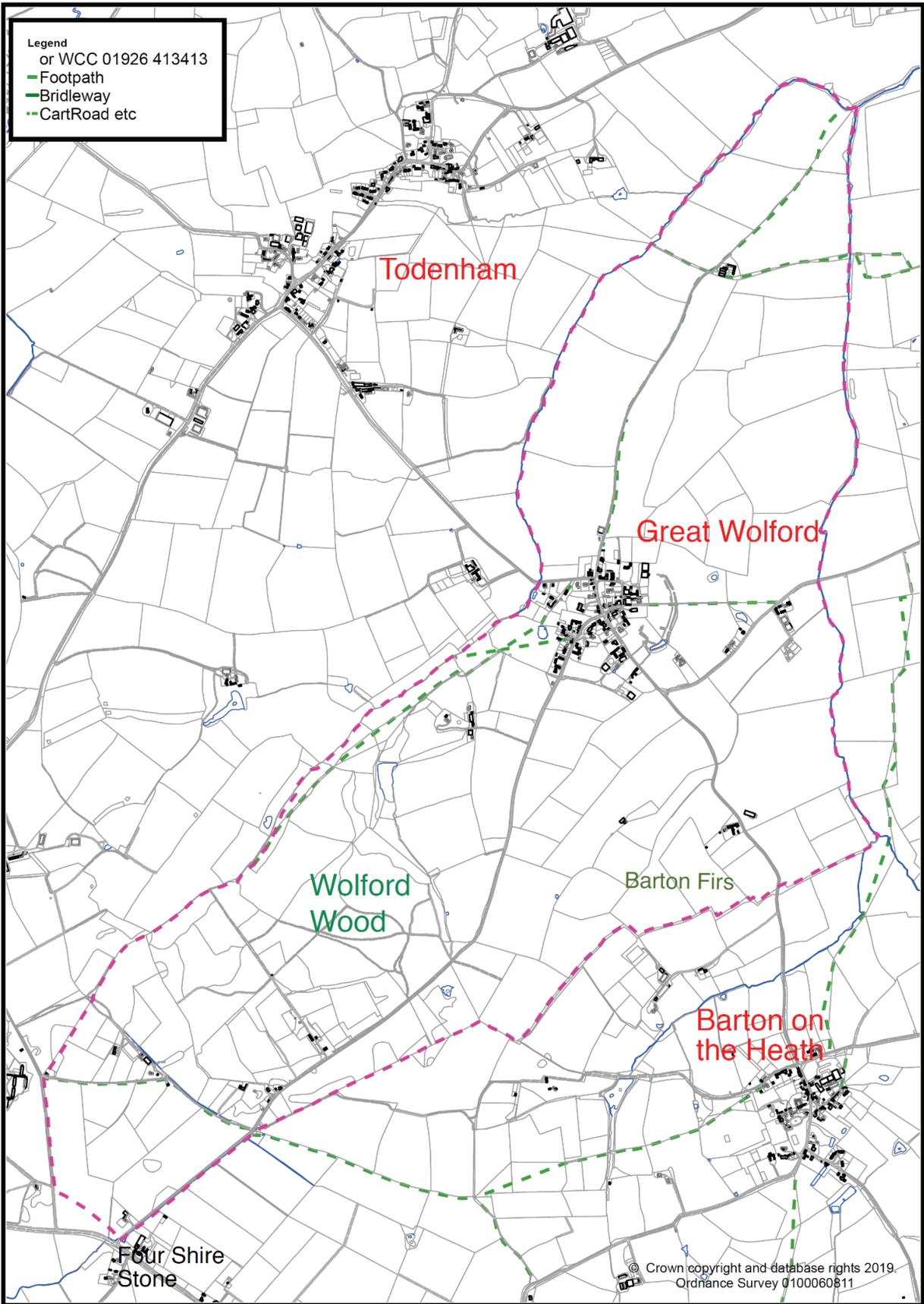
The Statement and its guidelines is addressed to all those who may be involved in planning, approving or implementing change that may alter the look or feeling of the village. It gives guidance in the consideration of planning applications, to inform residents and their architects and builders about aspects of developments that the village finds desirable, and to influence, for example, highways authorities and utility companies. To these ends it contains guidelines that should be taken into account in decision making.

Planning Policy Context

The Core Strategy Policy of Stratford-on-Avon District Council CS.16, does not identify Great Wolford as a Local Service Village, thus it is classified, along with the whole of the Parish, as 'All other settlements'. Consequently, development is restricted to small-scale community-led schemes which meet the need of the community. Development should also accord with the principles set out in Policy AS.10.

Although Great Wolford is not included in the nearby Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it lies within the Cotswold Fringe which Stratford-on-Avon District Council has designated a Special Landscape Area (SLA). Development proposals relating to settlements that lie within a SLA must respect the current and

historic relationship of that settlement within the landscape. The main area of the village is designated a conservation area (Map 2 - inside cover). The 2015 Great Wolford Housing Needs Survey identified a specific need for two-bedroom houses at a housing association rent. Wolford Wood has been identified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Fox and Hounds, the local pub, is currently recognized as an Asset of Community Value.



Map 1 – The Parish of Great Wolford

History and Settlement pattern

Great Wolford is a typical 'nucleated' village which means a 'clustered' settlement where the houses are grouped closely together, often around a central feature like a church, pub or village green.



The Green – one of the valued open spaces in the village

The village, which is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, originally centred around the crossing between the Ridgeway and its continuation south along the Barton Road. The main roads out of the village today were key routes in early times. The Ridgeway towards the north was the way to Shipston-on-Stour but also the farmers' main route to Mill Open Fields. Similarly the continuation along the Barton Road would have been the best way for farm traffic to the Barton and Beanham Fields. The road to the southwest out of the village was the main route to Moreton-in-Marsh, as it is now. Back Lane, near the church, simply went round part of the village.



Towards the Church looking across Manor Farm

Early Settlement

The earliest map of the village is from c1770 (Map 3) and enables us to see these roads. It also shows the extent of the settlement boundary. To the North, building stretched no further than the present houses on the eastern side of the Ridgeway. There were no buildings to the north of the Todenham Road. To the east, with the exception of Nethercote, Manor Farm and Fairview were the outer limits of settlement. The latter was also the southern limit of settlement, as was the Fox and Hounds to the west. There was nothing to the west of a line drawn from The Retreat, through the site of Ash House Farm to the Fox and Hounds.

Early Buildings

The Fox and Hounds pub (a Grade 2 listed building) was identified as an alehouse in the Warwickshire Quarter Sessions held between 1637 and 1650. It is likely that an alehouse was in operation much earlier than this, possibly in Tudor times, as these establishments often operated illegally. Manor House Farm (also a Grade 2 listed building) has been dated back to between 1670 and 1680, built on the site of an earlier Manor House. Another early building is a stone dovecote that was built around 1700 in the yard of Parsonage Farm.



Manor Farm, which is Grade 2 listed and dated between 1670 and 1680, was believed to have been built on the site of an earlier manor house. The land was once owned by Merton College, Oxford.



Map 3 - A 1770 map of Great Wolford, which shows that the road to Todenham did not exist at that time. The original rectory in front of the church is where Parsonage Farm is today. The Fox and Hounds, on the road to Moreton, is numbered 30. When the Carter's Leaze houses were built in the 1990s, they were named after the adjoining fields, marked on this map.

18th Century Buildings

Many of the late 18th century buildings survive, usually converted or changed in many ways. Of these, Ash House Farm is Grade 2 listed. Other probable survivors from this era are The Retreat, Road End, Lower Farm and Barn, Jasmine Cottage, The Teacher's House, Shepherd's Close, Parsonage Farm buildings, Fairview and Hillside Farm.

These survivors display a varied collection of architectural features. Buildings are almost entirely of stone. They have thatched, stone tile and Welsh slate roofs, wooden and stone lintels, stone-mullioned and wooden casement windows and a variety of porches and porch hoods. Many of these buildings have stone walls as their boundaries.





A selection of 18th and 19th century porch hoods that are a characteristic of many houses in the village

19th and Early 20th Century Buildings

In the 19th and 20th centuries, settlement extended along the Todenham Road, at Nethercote and lastly, along the Moreton Road. Development from the late 18th century involved two major influences.

Firstly, locally made brick clearly became an alternative to more expensive stone and a series of buildings demonstrate this. The Old School House, Rose and Bank Cottages, Rectory Farm and Beaton House were early examples. Brook and Brookhill Cottages, Christmas Cottage and Dinsdale were mid- to late-19th-century buildings, with Parsonage Farm dating from c1900.



Brickwork at Brookhill Cottage

The second major influence was Lord Redesdale's building of a series of Victorian Gothic houses for those working for Batsford Estate and a school on The Green. Some of these were sold by Lord Redesdale in 1920 to pay off estate debts.



Houses built by the Batsford Estate in the 19th century as homes for their estate workers

The Church of St. Michael and All Angels was entirely rebuilt in 1833 with none of its original architecture preserved. It was restored in 1885.



The Church gate and notice board

Late 20th and 21st Century Buildings

In the mid 20th century, there was further brick building, though probably not of local brick, at Home Field, Nethercote, The Leys and Ingram Close.



The Church of St Michael and All Angels, rebuilt in the 1830s. Front (West) Entrance and the rear (East) elevation.



Ingram Close



The Leys

In the 1960s and 1970s new building included the new Vicarage (built in the grounds of the Old Vicarage), Little Orchards, Longworth House (now Glasfryn) and Stirling House. In the 1990s Ash Farm land was redeveloped by Johnson and Johnson builders into Carters Leaze – a modern estate of houses that were built to a high specification using traditional materials and styling.



Glasfryn

Conversions and extensions include Jackdaw's Roost (converted barns at Hillside Farm), Oakview House, Stirling House, Christmas Cottage and Wolford Place.



Extension at Oakview House that blends well with the original 19th century building



Carter's Leaze

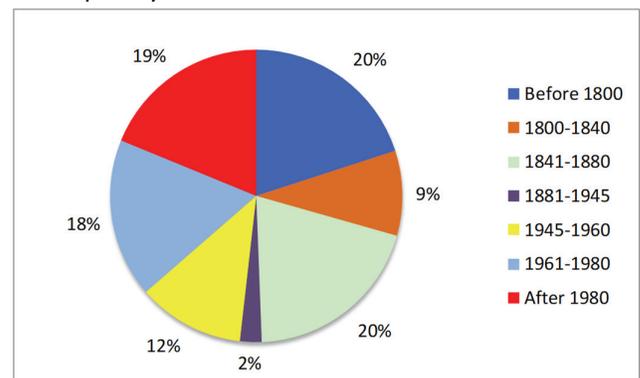


The Barns, converted from farm buildings in the 1990s

Extensions and Conversions

Most of the building this century has been in the form of extensions to buildings, although there have been a few new builds, total rebuilds and conversions. New builds include Wolf House, the Coach House and The Forge.

The following diagram (Figure 1) gives an idea of the breakdown by dates of original building of Great Wolford's houses. Of course, all have been subsequently modified or extended.



The net effect of this evolution is that Great Wolford Houses are, in fact, a pretty mixed and (before Planning Control was introduced) an unplanned collection of residences, typical of many villages.

The Village Today

The village has changed little in terms of the number of dwellings and population since the VDS of 2002. There are 96 dwellings with a population of just over 200. The electoral role stands at 185. The village is designated a dark sky area.

Most houses are permanently occupied with nine used as weekend homes or holiday rentals.

Most households own two vehicles. The increase in housing and traffic delays in nearby Moreton-in-Marsh means that the village is increasingly used as a 'rat run' in order to avoid Moreton. Speeding vehicles (which include an increasing number of parcel delivery vans) are a concern.

The population of Great Wolford is made up of young families, home workers, working households commuting to their place of work and retirees.

Farms & Businesses in Great Wolford

There are three active farms in the village, comprising sheep, cattle and arable farming.



Hillside Farm cattle on fields adjacent to the Moreton Road



Great Wolford Sheep Shearing



Harvesting OSR at Manor Farm

Redundant farm buildings at Manor Farm have been converted into successful furniture design studios and woodworking businesses.



A woodworking business in converted farm buildings

Businesses are varied. The owner of Wolford Wood operates a business supplying logs and pea and bean sticks. There is also a successful blacksmith/farrier operating from his forge.



Farrier at Work

Broadband coverage has improved in the last two years, enabling more home working. However mobile phone coverage is very patchy. Businesses operating from domestic properties include PR, a ski chalet business, computer management, website design, dog grooming, mosaic design and accountancy.

Social life

Social events are organised by the Church, the Wolford Village Fund, the Village Hall committee and the WI; they include boules, fish and chip suppers, quiz and cinema nights.

The Fox and Hounds, which for centuries has been the centre of community and social life in the village, closed in 2017 and at the time of going to print remains closed. It is subject to an Asset of Community Value order.



Boules Winners - 2018

A Save the Pub campaign is working hard to reopen the pub and has been running 'Pop up Pubs' on the village green or in Wolford Village Hall in nearby Little Wolford. These have been well attended.



The Fox and Hounds – Currently Closed (2018)



Catering for a 'Pop Up Pub' on The Green - 2018



More 'Pop Up Pub' catering on The Green - 2018

The closure of the pub has had a detrimental effect, not only on residents, but also on visitors to holiday houses and local B &Bs.

Public Transport

Public transport is extremely limited. A Shipston LINK bus service operates once a week as does a Villager Bus to Chipping Norton. UBUS operates a minibus request service three days a week which must be requested a week in advance. However there are bus services available for the transport of school pupils to and from a number of local schools.

The nearest rail service is Moreton-in-Marsh which provides good services to London and Worcester. Taxi services from Great Wolford to Moreton need to be booked well in advance as there are a limited number of suppliers, and it is rare to find an unbooked taxi upon arrival at Moreton station. There are two volunteer driver agencies locally that can provide trips to local hospitals and doctors surgeries. Decisions to reside in Great Wolford are not made on the basis of living close to good public transport links. Travel in and out of the village relies heavily on access to private transport.

Character of the Neighbourhood

Great Wolford lies to the south west of the Cotswold Fringe. It is bounded by the Nethercote and Todenham brooks.

Landscape and Farmland

The village is surrounded by rolling farmland. There are a few outlying buildings of mainly agricultural origin. The fields are marked by hedgerows containing many large trees, the majority of which are oaks. Some of these are stag oaks and, though picturesque, are over mature. The Barton Firs, which form a boundary to the south east of the Parish are an impressive visual feature that can be seen from many surrounding hills including the Kings Stone at Rollright.



Boundary Hedges with Oak Tree



Some fields retain ridge and furrow features

Wolford Wood, an ancient wood, to the south of the Parish, was confirmed as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1987. It contains rich ground flora, including early purple and bird's nest orchids, and forty eight species of birds and twenty four of butterflies. The woods are a source of forestry products.



Bluebells in Wolford Wood

The view of the church from Little Wolford Road across the Earthworks, itself an ancient monument, is particularly stunning. The churchyard doubles as a graveyard and a nature reserve.

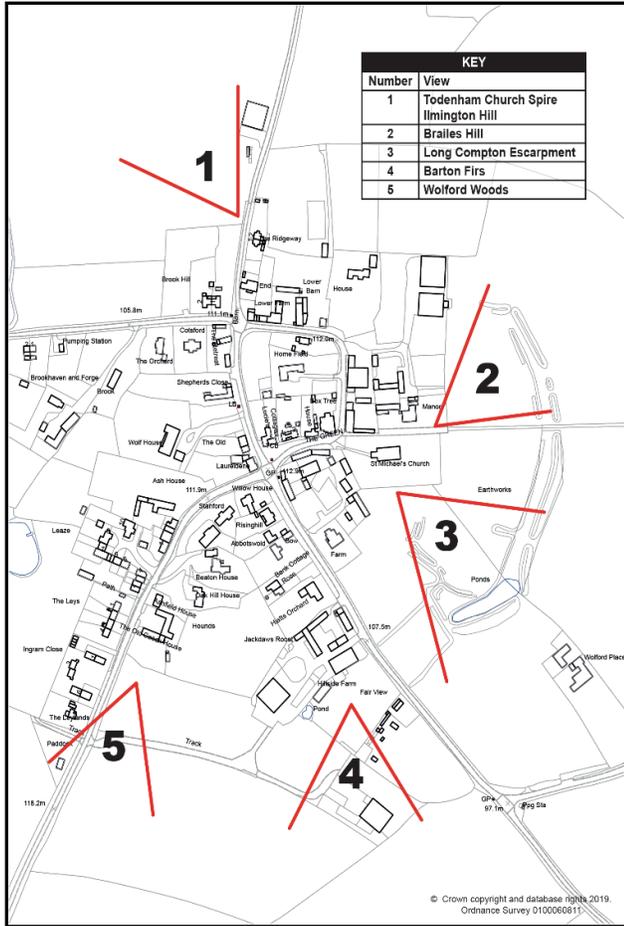
Footpaths head north along the Ridgeway towards Shipston-on-Stour, south west towards Moreton-in-Marsh skirting Wolford Wood, and east from beside the church to Nethercote.



The Ridgeway looking towards Todenham Spire

Response to our survey question about valued open spaces gave the strong opinion that the many views of the open countryside from the roads and footpaths, both within and outside the settlement, is very

important and any development in the landscape would be unwelcome. The rural setting of the village is much valued by the community.



Great Wolford - Notable Views

Townscape

The roads approaching the village might formally be considered double track. However they do not allow passing of large vehicles without encroachment on the verges. Consequently the verges are frequently damaged and deep ruts form adjacent to the tarmac, which can prove hazardous.



Typical damage to grass verges by passing traffic

Some of the roads within the village have pavements but their quality is variable. Grass verges within the village also suffer from vehicle misuse and parking on the pavement on the Moreton Road is common, preventing safe use by people in wheelchairs or with buggies. The speed limit within the village is 30 mph.

The designation of the village as a Dark Sky Area has ensured the absence of street lighting. Street signage is minimal. Street furniture comprises a Village Notice Board, a Church Notice Board and a memorial bench outside the church.

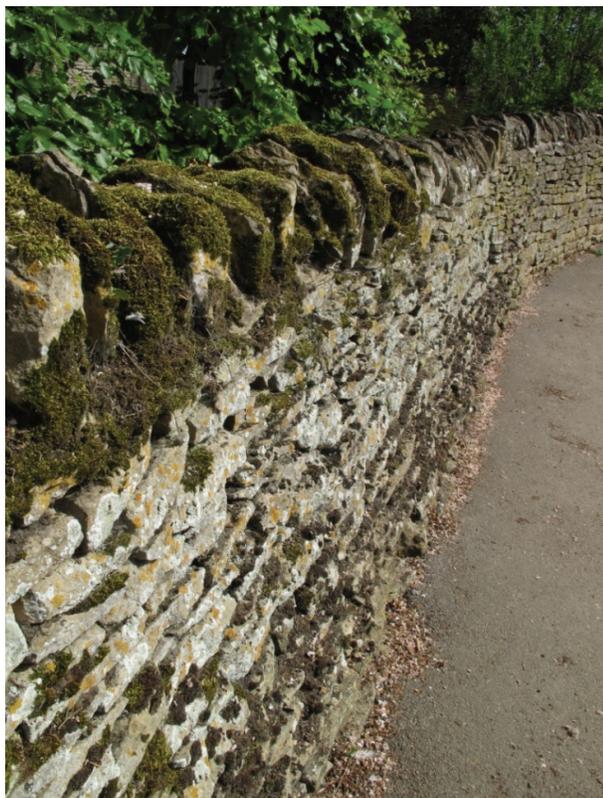


The phone box on The Green now houses a defibrillator and adjacent to it is an attractive map indicating the names of the houses in the village.



The converted telephone box now holds the defibrillator

Boundaries to houses and gardens are a mixture of stone walls, fencing and hedges.



Great Wolford dry stone boundary walls

Buildings

The gradual evolution over the centuries of Great Wolford has resulted in a variety of building styles. We illustrate them throughout the publication.

The category of housing is mixed, though detached and semi-detached houses are more numerous than terraces. Most are two story, some also have occupied attic space. It is desirable to limit the number of stories to a similar size. Most houses have chimneys, many of which are active. Traditional Cotswold stone buildings with Stonesfield slate roofs and 19th century red brick with stone quoins and mullions are the two most characteristic types. Most 20th century buildings harmonise with these, with some exceptions.

The two public buildings, the Church and the Fox and Hounds are both stone in construction.

Almost all houses have off street parking but many have insufficient spaces for the number of cars owned by households. As a consequence there is frequent on street parking particularly along The Green, and Moreton Road.



The Retreat – with thatching work in progress (2017)

Guidance for Development

The following sections develop guidance based on the survey, village meeting and general consultations with the community. The considerations lead to the guidelines at the end of the document.

New Development

The Stratford-on-Avon District Council Core Strategy Document restricts new development in Great Wolford to small-scale community-led schemes that meet a need identified by the local community. It was apparent from our consultations that the community supports such a policy and considers it appropriate for a village of our size. The survey showed support for some development outside the conservation area but within the built environment with a preference for it being along the Moreton Road. The addition of affordable housing, as indicated by the housing needs survey, was favoured.

Within the settlement any development of farm buildings should be controlled with their external appearance being respected. Domestic usage is preferred, though other usage would be considered.

The design of any new building, extension or conversion is crucial. Any such changes should reflect the character of the settlement and neighbouring properties and contribute harmoniously to the rural streetscape. Given the eclectic nature of the houses, this is not felt to be excessively restrictive. Stone and old brick, or carefully selected red brick are preferred as building materials. For roofs, slate, stone slate, thatch or carefully selected tiles are appropriate, with there being a preference for dormer windows over roof lights. Wooden, stone or metal windows are common. There was considerable objection to PVC windows; however, it should be noted that, visually, modern versions can be indistinguishable from painted wood.

Modern and innovative design will be supported, if it sensitively respects its site, location and the amenity of neighbouring properties, in terms of massing, volume and materials.

Energy efficient design of spaces and services and use of renewable 'green' energy (e.g. solar gain) is desirable.

Boundaries, Landscape and Parking

The boundaries of both properties and fields are vital in the visual appearance of the village and the parish. The rolling farmland and field pattern, bounded by trees and hedges which surround the village are visible throughout from the roads and footpaths. Few farm buildings mar the open character of the landscape. Any change in these aspects is unwelcome. The rural environment should be protected.

The village of Great Wolford is blessed with a number of traditional Cotswold stone walls and these should be maintained and encouraged. Traditional hedge mixtures are preferred to coniferous ones, being more in keeping with the rural character of the village.

The number of open spaces within the built environment is limited. The village green is small but now fiercely protected from encroachment. The nearby paddock has open fencing, greatly adding to its visual impact.



The paddock with open fencing

The churchyard and the earthworks to the east present one of the best views of the village from the east. A public footpath opposite the Fox and Hounds pub leads to a field with a large pond that is much appreciated by those whose houses back onto it and by walkers along the footpath. The scarcity of village open spaces means they are particularly valued and should be protected.



Great Wolford churchyard open space

Parking is a problem in some parts of the village. This is probably most evident along the Moreton Road where houses may lack sufficient off-street parking. It can be argued that the presence of parked cars slows the traffic, however they also provide difficulties of access for combine harvesters and other large vehicles. A village car park would be of great benefit.

Roads, Footpaths and Streetscape

There have been no roads or footpaths created since the 2002 Village Design Statement. The presence of potholes in roads is a national problem and unfortunately Great Wolford is a low priority in Warwickshire.

Speeding traffic through the village causes concern, again a nationwide problem. The Questionnaire results showed a preference for gateway style entrances and/or a 20mph speed limit. The idea of speed bumps was not popular. Speeding cars on the approach roads to the village, particularly through Nethercote, is also a problem due to the very reduced visibility on the bends of these country roads.

The erosion of verges is regrettable – both on the approach roads to the village and within the village itself. The installation of granite kerbs to prevent encroachment was more popular than the widening of the roads. It is felt that if cars were parked in a householder’s designated space, and not half way on road and path, this would improve not only the look of the village but would make the paths wider and safer for pedestrians.

Street lighting is not favoured and the designation of the village as a dark sky area is welcomed. External lighting should be PIR security lighting responsive to movement only. Environmentally favourable developments such as solar panels and heat pumps are to be encouraged subject to the normal restrictions.

The majority of Questionnaire replies indicated that overhead electricity cables were undesirable but to put existing cables underground is probably an expensive and therefore unrealistic ambition.



Great Wolford spire and overhead electricity lines

The quality of roadside footpaths is in general satisfactory. Public footpath signs are in place and although paths are muddy in the winter and narrowed by vegetation in summer, they are usually navigable.

There are many garden trees and roadside trees throughout the parish and the weeping birch on the village green is particularly loved. The majority of people replying to the Questionnaire would like to see a plan for further tree planting throughout the parish to maintain the landscape.



Weeping Birch on the Green in Summer and Winter

Road signs throughout the village are not too prolific, although some are in need of maintenance.



Some existing road markings have degraded and need repainting or renewing.

Comments added by residents

The questionnaire sent to local residents early in 2018 asked a number of specific questions and ended with an open question number 25.

Q25 - Please feel free to add any relevant comments in the box below.

This question received 31 individual responses. Eight of these were solely about, or included reference to the Fox and Hounds Public House. All of them called directly for the re-establishment of the pub and most of them rejected, specifically, change of use of the Fox and Hounds to residential use. This was the major area of comment received and all wished to see a return of the pub.

Further unanimity is difficult to detect from the responses. The unreliability of the electric supply is mentioned by two respondents and two mention speeding traffic entering the village from Moreton. Keeping the village rural rather than urban emerged as a specific point in two comments and the impact of development in a small village came across as a concern from others.



View from the top, The Fox and Hounds in bloom a few years back and the view coming in from the Moreton Road

Summary of Guidelines

The above considerations have led to the following guidelines:

- Any new development should be small scale and community led.
- The current built environment boundaries should not be extended.
- The design of any new building or extension of existing buildings is critical and should reflect the character of the settlement and neighbouring properties and contribute harmoniously to the rural streetscape.
- Reflecting the rural character of the settlement, building should not be over 2.5 storeys high
- Development of existing farm buildings within the settlement is welcomed as long as the result is aesthetically pleasing; they should retain their external appearance and preferably be for domestic use.
- Stone, or brick, which matches existing old red brick, are the preferred building materials.
- Roofs should be slate, stone, slate or thatch.
- Window frames should appear to be wooden, stone or metal.
- Boundaries should be low and preferably of stone walling or traditional hedging.
- Any new developments should have parking spaces in accordance with SDC guidelines.
- To encourage traffic calming a 20 mph speed restriction is desirable.
- Speed restriction should be extended to include Nethercote.
- Road narrowing with right of way restriction on entering the village along the Moreton and Nethercote roads is desirable.
- Any new building electricity supply should go underground where possible.
- Public footpaths, including those through private land, should be protected from development.
- The views of open spaces should be protected.
- There should be a plan for tree planting throughout the parish.
- Any new development should incorporate tree planting.
- The rich planting character in Wolford Woods should be protected as should other sites of protected and notable species across the parish.
- Grass verges and greens should be protected from damage caused by vehicles.
- Fox and Hounds should continue to be a pub and not converted into housing.
- Dark sky area should be respected. External lighting to redevelopment should be PIR security lighting responsive to movement only.
- The village should continue to be rural in character, not urban or suburban.

Acknowledgements

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