

SECTION 7

Conservation

7.0. CONSERVATION

7.1. INTRODUCTION

- 7.1.1. As stated previously in 'Tourism', Ross-on-Wye is a town of considerable architectural and historic importance and the town centre and its environs have been designated as an Outstanding Conservation Area. In addition to protecting the town's historic fabric from unsympathetic development by the powers afforded from Conservation Area designation, it is also necessary to promote schemes for enhancement and improvement.
- 7.1.2. There are many individual buildings and building groups (many 'listed') which contribute much to the town character. Though financial resources for grant aid are limited, (see Report of Survey - paragraph 8.6.1.), an important aim of the Local Plan is to encourage owners to maintain and improve these important buildings. Paragraph 9.9.2 in the 'Town Centre and Shopping' section of the Report of Survey refers to the apparent under-use of some properties and the Council will also encourage the re-use of such buildings in order to ensure their continued maintenance.

7.2. POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Policy CON 1 - "The District Council will encourage the improvement, renovation and appropriate re-use of existing buildings."

- 7.2.1. The District Council have already approved a policy entitled 'Design Criteria in the Ross-on-Wye Conservation Area - Planning Policy No. 4' which gives guidance to intending applicants proposing new building or extension works and also forms a background for the consideration of planning applications. It is obviously important to ensure that the overall design and detailing of new building and extensions is in sympathy with surrounding development.

Policy CON 2 - "New development and extensions in the Ross-on-Wye Conservation Area should respect the scale and character of surrounding development and should accord with the District Council's approved planning policy No. 4 (Appendix IV)."

- 7.2.2. Under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 (as amended by the Town and Country Amenities Act, 1974), Listed Building Consent is generally required before any building can be demolished (with specified exceptions). Though this does not mean that every building should be retained, it serves to protect the overall character and appearance of the area. Before consent is granted for the demolition of a building, detailed plans of the proposed redevelopment will need to be submitted to ensure that it is in sympathy with the area. This control ensures that no unsightly gaps will appear in continuous street frontages or that buildings are not set back from the original building line.

Policy CON 3 - "There will be a presumption against the demolition of buildings in the Conservation Area unless it can be demonstrated that the building is wholly beyond repair or proposals are submitted for the sympathetic redevelopment of the site."

7.2.3. In order to ensure that development proposals in the Conservation Area are sympathetic to their surroundings any planning proposals should be fully detailed including full elevational treatment.

Policy CON 4 - "Outline planning permission for building development will not normally be granted in the Conservation Area. Applications for development will be expected to show siting, design, external appearance (materials), means of access and landscaping. (Landscaping in this context includes the treatment of any land not covered by buildings and means of enclosure)."

7.2.4. The need for minor improvements in the town centre was referred to in the Report of Survey - 'Town Centre and Shopping' in paragraph 9.9.3. It is perhaps appropriate to consider such improvements in the context of Conservation Policies. Although of a minor nature, the improvement of street furniture, road and pavement surfaces and the co-ordinated repainting of building facades could make a considerable contribution to the enhancement of the Conservation Area.

Policy CON 5 - "Encouragement will be given to the gradual replacement of inappropriate street furniture with more attractively designed equipment whilst seeking the retention of the better quality existing furniture."

Policy CON 6 - "Encouragement will be given to the Highway Authority to improve the surface of pavements and carriageways with more attractive materials when opportunities arise."

7.2.5. Whilst it is appreciated that it would not be practical to impose large scale schemes on individual frontage owners, there may be instances where groups of owners are contemplating repainting and there would be merit in co-ordinating such projects. The District Council Planning Department would be prepared to offer advice on such schemes if approached.

Policy CON 7 - "Co-ordinated repainting schemes for street frontages in the Conservation Area will be encouraged."

7.2.6. Whilst the historic core of the town is potentially very attractive and many individual buildings have been improved with grant aid, there are many areas of the town which would benefit from enhancement and improvement. A number of possible schemes have already been identified and are listed in paragraph 8.9.2. - Report of Survey, and at the end of this paragraph of the report. Some of these schemes would be mainly the responsibility of the District Council whilst other schemes would have to be implemented by individual owners. It is recognised that it would not be possible to implement all of these schemes at the present time in view of financial constraints, however, after public comment has been received, it is hoped to identify some schemes for implementation during the Plan period. To give an indication of the type of improvements envisaged, a number of notional sketch proposals have been included in Appendix I.

Proposal CON 8 - "IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT SCHEMES WILL BE SELECTED FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION DURING THE PLAN PERIOD FROM THE FOLLOWING LIST:-

- i) ENHANCEMENT OF THE AREA FRONTING TO PEACOCKS STORE IN BROAD STREET
- ii) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS/ENHANCEMENT WORK AT 'FIVE WAYS' JUNCTION
- iii) IMPROVEMENTS/ENHANCEMENT OF CROFTS LANE ITSELF
- iv) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE AREA BETWEEN TRENCHARD STREET AND GREYTREE ROAD
- v) REPAIR OF MISCELLANEOUS STRUCTURES IN THE CONSERVATION AREA:-
 - a) STEPS AND GATE PIERS, ST. MARY'S CHURCH,
 - b) BOUNDARY WALL TO SOUTH OF THE PROSPECT,
 - c) MEDIEVAL STYLE WALL ADJOINING THE GAZEBO TOWER,
 - d) RETAINING WALL TO WILTON ROAD AND ROYAL PARADE,
- vi) RESTRICTION OF PARKING AND REMOVAL OF THE BOLLARDS AT THE LOWER END OF WYE STREET
- vii) IMPROVEMENT OF THE RIVERSIDE FRONTAGE AT WILTON."

7.2.7. Whilst the Written Statement of the proposed new County Structure Plan does include policies aimed at ensuring that important archaeological remains are not destroyed by any new development (Policy BE.21), the Ancient Monuments division of the Department of the Environment have stated that this Plan should acknowledge that archaeological sites are a constraint to development and that there is a need for archaeological work before development.

7.2.8. At the request of the District Council, in preparation of this Local Plan, the Hereford and Worcester County Council Archaeological Section have now provided a Study Report 'Archaeology in Ross-on-Wye', recommending certain policies for inclusion in this Written Statement.

Policy CON 9 - "Where development is agreed and an archaeological investigation is considered necessary on qualified archaeological advice, the developer should allow sufficient time and access to the site to enable archaeological recording to be carried out."

Policy CON 10 - "Development proposals will normally be resisted where they are on or adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument and would pose a threat to the Monument or site itself, or the character of its setting."

7.2.9. Following consultations on the Draft Plan, the Technical Officers Working Party of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Advisory Committee have requested that appropriate policies embodied in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan be included in this Plan even though many are covered by general Structure Plan policies.

7.2.10. Paragraph 8.11.2 of the Report of Survey identifies that the Plan area contains many woodlands, orchards and hay meadows which contain many rare plants which should wherever possible be protected.

Policy CON 11 - "The District Council will seek to protect more fauna and flora and the preservation of their habitats wherever practically possible in the Plan area."

7.2.11. The River Wye is one of only eight rivers in Britain of national or international nature conservation importance (paragraph 8.11.3 Report of Survey). The river and its immediate banks has therefore become designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.S.I.). It is obviously most important that such an asset is protected.

Policy CON 12 - "Development proposals will normally be resisted which are likely to adversely affect the River Wye Site of Special Scientific Interest or any other sites of local ecological importance."

7.2.12. Paragraph 8.10.1 stresses the importance of the Plan area's rural landscape. Much of the area lies within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and this high quality landscape is to be safeguarded for the benefit of visitors and local people alike.

Policy CON 13 - "To ensure landscape enhancement the District Council will encourage the removal of eyesores and will promote tree planting schemes."

Policy CON 14 - "The District Council will adopt a general presumption against development in the open countryside outside the planned built-up area of the town to protect the natural environment, unless the development is essential to the operation of rural activities and a need has been established (i.e. agriculture, forestry, recreation and leisure pursuits)."

Policy CON 15 - "To reinforce policies on woodland management, the Local Planning Authority will seek to increase and protect the stock of trees in the Plan area in the interests of amenity, by:

- (a) continuing to serve Tree Preservation Orders in appropriate circumstances, where there is a danger to the amenity of the area by loss of trees;
- (b) requiring replacement trees of suitable species for trees to be removed which are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order or which are important to the character of the Conservation Area;
- (c) requiring existing trees and woodlands to be retained wherever environmentally desirable, in association with new development wherever appropriate;
- (d) requiring landscaping schemes to be implemented in conjunction with new developments, as a condition of planning permission, wherever appropriate;
- (e) generally encouraging the planting of trees, where appropriate."

7.2.13. The District Council already has an approved planning policy to control the display of advertisement signs in the Conservation Area (Planning Policy No. 4). It is proposed that this policy be embodied into this Written Statement.

Policy CON 16 - "All advertisement signs proposed for display within the Conservation Area should accord in size, design and location with the District Council's approved planning policy No. 4 (Appendix IV)."