

# Stoke Gabriel Conservation Area Appraisal



# Management Plan

Adopted July 2007



South Hams  
District Council

# **STOKE GABRIEL CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN**

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN.**

This Management Plan complements the **Stoke Gabriel Conservation Area Character Appraisal**. While the latter defines and evaluates the special interest of the conservation area, the Management Plan identifies the issues for its future development and enhancement. The overarching planning policies for the area are included in the adopted **South Hams Local Plan** (1996), the deposit draft **Local Plan Review**, the **Local Development Framework** documents and the adopted **Devon Structure Plan**. Generic advice for the conservation areas of the South Hams is provided in the Supplementary Planning Guidance Note **New Work in Conservation Areas** (2001). The plan also takes account of the wider global, national and regional picture.

Using the **Stoke Gabriel Conservation Area Character Appraisal** as a basis, the Management Plan identifies those areas or features which could benefit from enhancement, considers where development might take place, where special policies may be required, or where enforcement is appropriate. The table at the back sets out a programme for action.

## **2. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Stoke Gabriel conservation area lies within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The current development plan for the village comprises the 1996 South Hams Local Plan and the Devon Structure Plan. The 2002 Local Plan Review (LPR) reached First Deposit stage and now carries only limited weight. The government has introduced a new system of Local Development Frameworks to replace Local Plans. Under both the Local Plan and the LPR there are 3 areas in the Stoke Gabriel Conservation Area which are subject to special policies; Policy Areas 1 & 2 cover the large open spaces occupied, respectively, by Yarde Orchard and Church Orchard / the former V&A car park. The policy states that these areas should be retained as open spaces in order to maintain the contribution they make to the visual character of the area. Policy Area 3 covers the low density development area to the Duncannon Lane and around Mill Hill. It aims to maintain the low density of development in the area and to preserve its character and landscape. If the boundaries of the Policy Areas were to change in the Local Development Framework there are a number of tree preservation orders in the conservation area. These include general ones for the gardens of the Gabriel Court Hotel and Stoke Gabriel House.

## **3. NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONSERVATION AREA**

Stoke Gabriel was subject to enormous growth in the post-war period and the conservation area suffered the loss of a considerable amount of open space and much of its rural backdrop. There may be scope for infill development in the village if this is sited outside the Policy Areas of the Local Plan or important open space identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal. Where this is the case, the design and quality of construction will always need to be of the very highest order in accordance with central Government guidance and the SHDC publication **New Work in Conservation Areas**. This requirement should equally apply within the 50m buffer zone around the conservation area and to prominent sites where views into or out of the conservation area are affected. The appropriateness of new development will always need to be looked at in detail, taking into account the history of the site, the character of surrounding buildings and its contribution to the townscape. These issues are best explored as and when proposals for development arise rather than providing detailed information in this document. In accordance with the Local Plan, low development density should be preserved where it survives.

## **4. STOKE GABRIEL CONSERVATION AREA: SWOT ANALYSIS.**

As part of the preparation of the Conservation Area Appraisal and this Management Plan, a questionnaire (see appendix 1) was sent out to the residents of the village. The response was exceptionally good with more than 50 questionnaires returned. In addition a presentation was made to the children at the Primary School and they were asked the same questions. The table below is based on the answers given in the returned questionnaires. These have been used as guidance for the Management Plan.

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautiful situation overlooking Mill Pool and the river Dart</li> <li>• Surviving open spaces/orchards</li> <li>• Surviving historic buildings</li> <li>• Stone boundary walls</li> <li>• Church</li> <li>• Thriving community with surviving shops, Post Office and school</li> <li>• Access to the countryside/walks</li> <li>• Character specimen trees and fruit trees</li> <li>• Independent community retaining some medieval character.</li> <li>• Not on the way to somewhere else/no through traffic</li> <li>• Vernacular architecture</li> <li>• Paths and narrow Lanes</li> <li>• Traditional village good to bring up family</li> <li>• Lack of street lights</li> <li>• Church Walk</li> <li>• Surrounding unspoilt countryside and wildlife</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive traffic</li> <li>• Parked cars on streets (Barnhay, Coombe Shute, Church House Inn)</li> <li>• Unsympathetic modern building design</li> <li>• Caravan sites</li> <li>• Use of inappropriate materials for public areas and flower beds</li> <li>• Out-of-character house extensions</li> <li>• Domestic wheelie bins on road.</li> <li>• Permission to breach stone walls</li> <li>• Inappropriate tree and hedge planting in terms of species and locations</li> </ul>
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<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain stone walls</li> <li>• Tidy former V&amp;A car park</li> <li>• Introduce free parking areas for residents and or visitors</li> <li>• Introduce traffic calming</li> <li>• Manage area for wildlife conservation</li> <li>• Improve walkway along Mill Pond shore line</li> <li>• Remove rubbish bins</li> <li>• Maintain green spaces</li> <li>• Introduce one way traffic system</li> <li>• Introduce information plaques or better signage</li> <li>• Carefully monitor applications for extension or new development</li> <li>• Introduce limited street lighting</li> <li>• Reinstate ferry</li> <li>• Plant appropriate trees to retain leafy character</li> <li>• Convert former V&amp;A car park to wildlife area</li> <li>• Build low cost housing for locals on former V&amp;A car park</li> <li>• Create community car parking at former V&amp;A car park</li> <li>• Access only for Coombe Shute</li> <li>• Clean the Dart of mud and silt</li> <li>• Regular de-silting of Mill Pool</li> <li>• Remove/make thinner double yellow lines</li> <li>• Reduce number of independent road signs</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Development in open spaces/orchards</li> <li>• Any new development (not just in conservation area)</li> <li>• More holiday homes</li> <li>• Growth in traffic</li> <li>• Introduction of street lights</li> <li>• Closure of local shops, pubs and PO</li> <li>• Loss or alteration of stone walls</li> <li>• Building on the former V&amp;A car park</li> <li>• Loss of specimen and historically important trees</li> <li>• Unsympathetic extensions</li> <li>• Silting up of Mill Pool</li> <li>• Construction of modern houses</li> <li>• Creation of more caravan sites</li> <li>• Widening of access roads</li> <li>• Further development outside village boundaries</li> <li>• Construction of supermarket</li> <li>• Growth of commercialisation</li> </ul>
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## 5. THE V&A CAR PARK

This site lies in the heart of the conservation area beneath Coombe Shute. At present it is covered by Policy Area 2 in the Local Plan (see above). It is used for informal parking and has a rather neglected feel. There have been proposals in recent years for limited development of the site, including housing. The latter would

be contrary to the current policy position, but this would need to be weighed carefully against any environmental improvement to the site and community gains resulting from any overall scheme.

## **6. AREAS WITH SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT**

### *Traffic Management and Public Realm.*

Concerns about the volume and speed of traffic that passes through the village have been raised and traffic calming suggested. However, given that Stoke Gabriel is not a 'through village' the amount of traffic is actually relatively small; furthermore, the very narrowness of the streets is as effective a form of traffic calming as unsightly road humps or other measures

Double yellow lines are intrusive in parts of the village (even though their width and colour in Devon are more discreet than in other parts of the country). However, the alternative of having many individual signs (or worse, indiscriminately parked cars) is even less desirable.

## **7. ARTICLE 4(2) DIRECTION**

Only a small additional range of works is brought under planning control within a conservation area compared with an undesignated area. These do not include the replacement of doors and windows and the appearance of many historic settlements has been harmed by the cumulative replacement of such features using inappropriate styles and materials. While historic windows and doors typically demonstrate traditional delicate proportions and high quality joinery in durable softwoods, modern ones often depart significantly from this due to the use of modern materials and the need to accommodate double glazing.

The effect of replacement double-glazed windows on the character of the Stoke Gabriel conservation area has not generally been as bad as in some other places. This is due, in part, to the fact that many buildings are partially concealed or face away from the streets. However, there are a significant number of unlisted buildings in the conservation area where inappropriate window replacement could have a damaging effect.

There are other permitted works which it would be beneficial to bring under planning control. Many of the walls, which contribute so much to the character of the Stoke Gabriel conservation area, could be partially demolished under the present planning regime without the need for planning permission or Conservation Area consent.

Article 4(2) Directions enable the local planning authority to remove certain permitted development rights in order to protect all or part of the conservation area from unsympathetic change. As a consequence, planning permission would be required to undertake such works (though no fee would be payable). It would therefore be desirable to have an Article 4.2 Direction in the Stoke Gabriel conservation area covering all works of alteration and demolition to all the walls, windows and doors. As there would be workload implications for the Planning Department with no financial benefit from fees, the Council will carry out a value for money assessment before considering imposing an Article 4.2 Direction. If served, the Direction will be advertised and those affected notified.

## **8. BUILDINGS AT RISK**

Stoke Gabriel is fortunate in having no buildings that are obviously at risk.

## **9. ENFORCEMENT**

Where works requiring it have been carried out without planning permission, enforcement action will be considered.

## **10. TREES AND LANDSCAPE**

Both native species (the churchyard yew, apple trees and hedgerow standards) and exotic specimens found mainly in gardens (notably Stoke Gabriel House, Stoke House and Gabriel Court) are prominent and play a very important part in the character of Stoke Gabriel conservation area. The Council must be notified if it is proposed to carry out works to or fell a tree within the conservation area.



The Council will consider the need to serve Tree Preservation Orders where trees contribute to the character of the conservation area.

### **11. ARCHAEOLOGY**

There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Conservation area, the nearest being the earthwork enclosures and field systems, approximately 1½ km to the east of the village. The historic landscape characterisation shows the historic core of Stoke Gabriel as being almost analogous to the conservation area, with modern settlement occurring to the north of this area.

Any development within or adjacent to the historic core of Stoke Gabriel will be subject to either predetermination archaeological investigation or PPG16 planning condition. The level of archaeological mitigation will depend upon the nature, extent and location of the development as well as previous disturbance to the site.

### **12. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PREPARATION OF APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

In accordance with English Heritage Guidance on the preparation of conservation area appraisals and management plans, the local community of Stoke Gabriel has been involved in the process from an early stage.

### **13. CHANGES TO THE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY**

The boundary of the conservation area has been revised and the following areas are now included due to the contribution they make to its character and appearance:

1. The **Mill Dam and Mill Pool** – both defining historic features of the village.
2. The **walled garden** on the corner of Broadpath and Stoke Hill, an attractive historic remnant of the village and **Hérons Reach** and **Oakridge** north of Stoke Hill – 20<sup>th</sup> century house which, due to their setting and sensitivity make a positive contribution.

### **14. SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CONSERVATION AREA**

Modern village life tends not to be the sustainable idyll it once was; the lack of local services and employment lead to high levels of commuting and car dependency. However, the proximity of Stoke Gabriel to Paignton and, to a lesser extent, to Totnes and Brixham, with reasonable public transport connections, means it could be said to perform better than many other rural settlements in this regard. The existence of the Primary School, especially, is an important benefit.

As far as moves to future self sufficiency are concerned, the existence of the historic tidal barrage begs the question of whether one day this free energy source might once again be harnessed for power generation. Doubtless, this would be controversial, but it could provide a step toward the future self-sufficiency of the village.

Sometimes there is perceived to be a conflict between historic and environmental conservation, for example the improvement of insulation of historic buildings; usually there is a solution, however, and the Council's Conservation team will always be happy to provide advice on how best to reconcile the two.

Strategic Objective	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Accountable Officer	Resources	Start date	Target date	Links to other strategies
	Open space strategy	District wide draft open space strategy under preparation	RK	Staff time	Mar 2007	Dec 07	
	Article 4.2 Direction	Internal discussions about its implications and strategy for serving it.	SM	Staff time	March 2007	Autumn 2009	
	Enforcement	Continued vigilance of unauthorised works in the conservation area		Staff time	Ongoing		