LOWER LYDBROOK CONSERVATION AREA

CHARACTER APPRAISAL

FOREST OF DEAN DISTRICT COUNCIL
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Introduction
Lydbrook is a large village set in the valley of the Grethough Brook which is a tributary of the River Wye. The Lydbrook Valley is narrow and steep sided with the result that Lydbrook itself has a strong linear form, and is tightly constrained. Though the whole village is known as Lydbrook, the settlement is divided into three parts, known as Upper, Central and Lower Lydbrook.

The development of Lydbrook, and its form and character, owes much to the industrial history of the area. Coal, timber and metal ores were all important elements in the early development of the settlement, followed later by metal industries, particularly tinplate, and the construction of railways, including the Severn and Wye line. The buildings on the valley floor still reflect this later period of industrial development. This industrial character is especially noticeable in Lower Lydbrook where the bridge parapets of the old Severn and Wye line can still be seen, and also workers cottages which served the former tinplate works are still in existence.

What is a Conservation Area?
A Conservation Area is defined in statute as "an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance"
Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 states: "It is the quality and interest of areas, rather than that of individual buildings, which should be the prime consideration in identifying Conservation Areas. There has been increasing recognition in recent years that our experience of a historic area depends on much more than the quality of individual buildings - on the historic layout of properties and thoroughfares; on a particular 'mix' of uses; on characteristic materials; on appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; on the quality of......street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; on vistas along streets and between buildings; and on the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits the pedestrian use of spaces between buildings. Conservation Area designation should be seen as the means of recognising the importance of all these factors and ensuring that conservation policy addresses the quality of townscape in its broadest sense as well as the protection of individual buildings."

Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas. Clear assessment and definition of an area's special interest and the action needed to protect it will help to generate awareness and encourage local property owners to take the right sort of action for themselves.

The Implications of Designation
The designation of a Conservation Area imposes specific duties on the Local Planning Authority. The Authority must formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area, and submit them to public consultation. In addition, in exercising their planning powers, the Local Planning Authority must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Areas.
The implications for the local Authority, the District and County Councils, the developer, and the councillors are significant. The Conservation Area, and its designation, are in the public interest and need to be maintained. The Conservation Area is already protected by planning regulations, and any development that might affect it must be carefully considered.

The implications for the property owners and occupiers are also significant. They are entitled to protect their property, and any development that might affect it must be carefully considered.

The implications for the residents and the public are also significant. They are entitled to enjoy the beauty and the history of the area, and any development that might affect it must be carefully considered.
The setting and topography of the Conservation Area

The Lower Lydbrook Conservation Area lies within the valley of the Greathough Brook which is a tributary of the River Wye (See Map 1). The Greathough Brook, like many other tributaries of the Wye has a dramatic relief of steep valley sides with little level land at the valley floor. The Conservation Area is located within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the River Wye is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest along its entire course.

The steep hillsides to the east and west of the Greathough Brook with many fine individual and groups of trees, contribute much to the character of the Lower Lydbrook Conservation Area. At the southern end of the Conservation Area there is little level land on the valley floor, though the valley gradually opens out as the Greathough Brook approaches its confluence with the River Wye. Most of the housing occurs in a linear form on the flatter land on the valley floor and lower valley slopes. However, the valley does continue to fall in level towards the River Wye. Hence from some points within and outside the Conservation Area, the rooftscape and layout of buildings become particularly important to the character and appearance of the area. Such views could have an effect on the need for privacy of rear gardens and this could be one of the reasons for the widespread use of coniferous hedges and specimen trees which are otherwise alien to the natural flora of the area. The valley can be viewed from the valley sides and ridge where public footpaths allow access. In these circumstances the rooftscape, walls and landscaping are particularly important in maintaining the character and appearance of Lower Lydbrook.

Part of the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area is formed by the dismantled railway. This is sited high up the valley sides and affords extensive views of the settlement below.

The Historic Evolution of the Area

The Greathough Brook rises from the watershed around Mirey Stock. On this brook there were three private forges, known as Upper, Middle and Lower Forges, the latter being established around 1610. The Lower Forge stood within 200 metres of the River Wye close to the site of the Forge Hammer Inn. In the late Eighteenth Century works were established at Lower Forge and Middle Forge for the purposes of making tin plate. Many of the cottages in the vicinity of the Lower Forge date from this time. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the economic fortunes of the tin plate works began to decline with many stoppages due to ‘breakages’, accidents and the recession in the tinplate market following the introduction of the McKinley Tariff, which limited trade with the United States. The start of the Twentieth Century saw no great improvement in trade, and after several more
The area around and within the land uses within Lower Lyndock Conservation Area is an imposing two and three story building and a Mission House for the Quaker Family. It is of historical interest, it was built in 1769 and is a slate covered building with a central stone stack. The interior features a large central fireplace, and was incorporated into a C19 house. It is a three storey building with 16 pane sash windows.

Vindicet House was built in the early Victorian Century of brick, and is a 2 storey.

The house was bought by Herbert Hairer, who was an engineer and who was responsible for the design of the building. It was built in 1817.

The building was constructed as a warehouse, and was built at the same time of course as the railway. It is believed that the dock house was built here and took place at the wharf at lower Lyndock, and indicators that a small amount of coal handling equipment was located here. In addition to the furniture industry and the bridge piers remaining.

In the location, the reason for such a grand house being built was known about 6 pane sash windows. Little is known about the exterior of the building, and the house is a three storey building with a large central chimney.

In 1835, after 1890, the buildings fell into disrepair and the works chimneys were removed. In 1890, after a fire in 1890, the buildings fell into disrepair and the works chimneys were removed.
Colours within the area

The predominating colours within the Conservation Area are green and brown, as the vegetation of the valley sides and the trees are so prominent. Colours are generally subdued with a mellow yellow/green stone being used in the construction of many properties, and dark grey slate on the majority of roofs. There is also the rich red of the bricks used in the building of Lydbrook and Viaduct Houses.

Micro-climate

The steep sided valley faces north and therefore receives little sunlight in the depths of winter, making it sometimes, a gloomy place. The River Wye floods regularly which causes flooding to many of the lower lying properties and to the road near the river.

Tree Cover in and Around the Area

Individual and groups of trees are an important visual feature in the Lower Lydbrook Conservation area (see Map 2). The main groups of trees are located on the hill slopes outside the Conservation Area, but these form an important backdrop to the built development. In and around Lydbrook House are a number of fine single specimen trees which will be protected by Conservation Area designation.

Patterns of Movement

The main road through the settlement comes a significant amount of traffic, including heavy goods vehicles which serve the industrial sites further up the valley. There are narrow lanes and accesses off this main road. The former B4228 road from English Bicknor to Kerne Bridge forms a strong barrier to pedestrians which tends to isolate the River Wye and the riverside park from the settlement.

Views

Views out of the settlement are particularly important (See Map 3). Views are mainly down the valley across the rooftops, between the houses and down the roads giving views across the river meadows. Interestingly, the River Wye is not an important visual feature when viewed from the majority of the Conservation Area because it is substantially screened by banks.

Views upwards to the steeply sloping valley sides, with the predominance of trees and the remains of the old railway and tram roads form an important backdrop. From the opposite bank of the River Wye, along which there is a Public Right of Way, part of the Wye Valley Walk (a Regional Route), there are extensive views of most of the Lower Lydbrook Conservation Area. There are no public roads on this side of the river, and very few buildings, but the views into the Conservation Area across the river are still significant.

Pattern of Building

The settlement is mainly linear in form with development following the contours, and constrained to the narrow strip of level land along side of the Brook and the road. Development though, has taken place at differing angles to the road and stream giving a staggered, and slightly haphazard feel. Many properties have been built on sites 'cut' into the steep valley sides, resulting in very small rear gardens many of which are visible, and in some cases prominent front gardens.
problems caused by flooding and doors have been fitted to alleviate the unusual size of the internal doors and the windows a college dormitory. This building is also

![Diagram of buildings](image)

**Fig. 4** Terraced houses typical of the Conservation Area

separately at a later date.

The Lydford House Estate will be sold off as demand for Lydford and Vedic House Formed Part of

is believed that Vedic House formed part of


The local Lowfield style is evident in many of

![Diagram of buildings](image)

**Fig. 3** Mill Row

parts of the Conservation Area.

giving a certain intimacy and coherence to this

with many small colleges in a compact area,

Forge Hamer Hall is a compact area.

partly characterized around Mill Row and the

![Diagram of buildings](image)

**Fig. 5** Mill Row and the

The settlement is squeezed by the valley sides

Density of Buildings

![Diagram of buildings](image)
MAP 3
VIEWS IN AND OUT OF THE SETTLEMENT

Panoramic views up and down the Wye Valley from Lower Lydbrook Park.

Views down onto Lower Lydbrook from dismantled railway and bridge parapet.

View up valley to partly wooded steep sloping valley

NOTE
Throughout Lower Lydbrook there are views out of the settlement. As the valley sides rise steeply, they are a strong visual feature from most parts of the Conservation Area.

KEY
Main views in and out of the settlement

Scale 1:2500

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The Morphology of the area
The area is characterised by differing heights and angles. The linear form of the settlement has not restricted development to straight lines of properties fronting the road, but a more interesting form has appeared with frontages at varying angles, located close to the road or away from the road, close to the stream or away from the stream. The underlying topography with the slope down to the river, has ensured development at different heights, also the differing styles of properties ranging from small cottages to larger houses means that the 'roofscape' is not only very visible, but also very interesting.
The area is also characterised by local stone walls fronting onto the main road and lanes. Old photographs indicate that here were more prominent in years gone by, and that some have been removed or have fallen into disrepair. In addition, trees have seeded adjacent to some of the walls reducing their prominence.

Building Materials and Construction
Stone is the main construction material, though brick has been used on Lydbrook and Viaduct House and some stone properties have been rendered over. The stone is generally green/yellow. New properties built adjacent to Mill Row have been constructed in a red/grey reconstituted stone which, with hindsight was not particularly appropriate as it does not match the stone in this locality. Other new properties have been constructed with smooth painted render and small stone quoins which is not characteristic of the local building and appears out of place. Slate has been used almost exclusively as a roofing material though there is evidence that clay tiles were used in the village. There has been extensive use of profiled concrete roof tiles in the construction of the newer properties, and the re-roofing of many older properties. Whilst these tiles have weathered, the use of natural alternatives would have been preferable.

The survival of Building Features
There is still evidence of the stone piers to the viaduct on the valley floor, and the stone bridge parapets high above the valley floor.
Adjoining Viaduct House are the brick walls of the old kitchen garden, which are particularly visible because of the steeply sloping land.

Disfiguring Features
The public toilets and surrounding area detract from the appearance of the Conservation Area. The toilets are constructed of concrete blockwork with a flat roof, and their appearance has no respect to the style, design and colour of other buildings in the area (See Map 4).

Fig 5 Area with possibilities for enhancement

Sites which could enhance the area
Enhancement/redesign of the exterior of the public toilets would be of great benefit to the visual appearance of the Conservation Area. In addition, the area surrounding the toilets, possibly including the Public House should be incorporated into any enhancement scheme.
The riverside park is a pleasant and popular area for parking and informal recreation. The park is managed by a Committee of local people, and it may be worthwhile joining forces to ensure that the riverside park continues to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and the AONB.

Open Spaces within and around the Area

- Between the former B4228 and the River Wye, there are good views up and down the Wye Valley.
- A riverside park known as the Turn is managed by the Vaughan family. The area consists of formal and informal areas, and a small amount of land around the Wye has been planted. From this area, there are good views up and down the Wye Valley.

The remains of the bridge piers and parapets and their associated walls and railings are special features within the Conservation Area (See Map 4).

Landmarks, Focal Points and Special Features
Concluding Analysis

Lower Lydbrook is a place of architectural and historic importance which it is desirable to preserve and enhance. The topography of the area and the local availability of raw materials led to a strong industrial presence in this valley. This industrial history is still very visible in and around Lower Lydbrook and is the main factor which influences its present character. These remains in most places are well preserved, and also there has been little new development to obliterates or dilute the industrial character. At every turn within the settlement there are clear clues to the industrial past, from the names of properties like Viaduct Villas to the physical evidence of industrial uses like workers cottages and bridge parapets. There is also a variety in the scale of the buildings from small workers dwellings to grand houses set in large gardens overlooking the River Wye. In many other places in the District the industrial past has been removed or obscured by new development, but in Lower Lydbrook it is clearly visible and gives the settlement a special character.

Fig 6 Viaduct Villas are a reminder of the industrial past and an attractive feature today.

Around the site of the Lower Forge were a number of industrial buildings, a mill pond and many dwellings. The tinplate works and the mill pond have disappeared, along with some of the dwellings, but many still remain. The most prominent of these are the cottages at Mill Row which were workers houses serving the former tin plate works at the Lower Forge. They were built in a curved terrace and were very small cottages which provided for the basic needs of the workers. They have been renovated and modernised with individual cottages knocked together to make larger properties, but their appearance reflect their links with the areas industrial past.

The Severn and Wye Railway Line was a major feature in Lower Lydbrook with its viaduct towering above the settlement. Old photographs indicate that the viaduct was a major piece of civil engineering, which dominated completely the northern end of the Lydbrook Valley. The main spans of the viaduct were removed in 1956 and the bridge piers and parapets demolished. The stone bridge parapets are visible high up on the east and west sides of the valley, and the stone base of one of the supporting piers can be seen behind Lydbrook House. The steep flight of steps remain leading down from the former Lower Lydbrook station to the road near to the Courtfield Arms.

In addition to the special character resulting from the industrial heritage of Lower Lydbrook, there are other factors brought out in this assessment which give a special character to the area.
Lydrock has produced a landscape that is not only combined with the fell in the levels down the valley building style and form of the dwellings. The dramatic stream, built at varying angles, the clinging with properties flourishing on the roads and the lower Lydrock has developed a linear form

(see map 4) Possible they are preserved and enhanced Lydrock and it is desirable that whatever important feature in the appearance of lower a sense of enclosure, These walls are an eye. They link properties together and maintain pieces are an attractive feature which focus the Stone walls that run the highway in many together.

even where the buildings are crowded significant throughout and give an open feel settlement, views upwards and downwards are stopping. Pillars form a backdrop to the entire Conservation Area with a deeply insetted Conservation Area within a deeply insetted The location and setting of the buildings in the