



CHARACTER APPRAISAL
FOR
STAFFORDSHIRE AND
WORCESTERSHIRE CANAL
CONSERVATION AREA

MAY 2007



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area (the Area) was designated by Wyre Forest District Council in 1978 and the boundary was viewed and amended in 2007. Being a linear Conservation Area, it stretches from just north of the Basins area at Stourport-on-Severn, meandering through to the edge of the District north of Caunsall, for over fourteen kilometres, approximately following the path of the River Stour. The canal goes on north out of the District through South Staffordshire, eventually linking into the Trent and Mersey Canal at Great Haywood, South Staffordshire and is designated a Conservation Area from the Wyre Forest District boundary line, north to the junction on the Trent and Mersey Canal.

Associated with the Canal are several bridges, locks, tunnels, cottages, walls, and the towpath, which help form part of its special interest. There are also many trees and shrubs along the canal side that add to the character of the Area.

This document aims to set out the special architectural and historic characteristics of the Conservation Area. The character appraisal will be of interest and use to those involved with development and use of the area, and that adjoining it, to preserve and enhance the character of the Canal Conservation Area and its environs.

The Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004) contains policies, outlined in Appendix 2, to assist in preserving and enhancing Conservation Areas within the District: these will be used when considering any development or other proposals within or adjacent to the defined boundaries of this Conservation Area.

2. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The first Conservation Areas were designated under the Civic Amenities Act (1967). This Act was superseded by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69 of this later Act imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to identify areas that are of special architectural or historic interest, where it is desirable to preserve and enhance the character and appearance, and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) *Planning and the Historic Environment* gives further guidance on Conservation Areas, their designation and their assessment, and clarifies the legal responsibilities of both owners of properties within Conservation Areas, and the Local Authorities whose areas the Conservation Area falls within.

The General Permitted Development Order 1995 (GPDO) classes a Conservation Area as being "Article 1(5) land". Whilst planning permission is not required for many types of works outside such areas, control is given to Local Authorities for works being undertaken within Conservation Areas, including,

but not exclusively, the enlargement of a dwelling-house, the rendering of such properties, and the installation of antennae and satellite dishes.

The Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004) contains various policies describing the aims and objectives of the Local Authority with relation to the wider historic environment, and in particular to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation areas within the District. These policies are contained within Appendix 1 of this Appraisal.

English Heritage published new guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals in August 2006. In preparing this Appraisal and the Management Plan, regard has been given to this guidance. A public consultation was carried out between January and February 2007 on both these documents, and on proposals for amendments to the boundary, which have now been Adopted and incorporated into the Conservation Area.

It should be noted here that it is not only buildings that are protected when a Conservation Area is designated, trees are also given some protection. Furthermore, PPG 15 also advises that highway work should reflect the need to protect the historic environment, including road building and highway maintenance.

3. ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER



An aerial view of a section of the Staffordshire and Worcester canal (highlighted in blue) at Puxton Marsh, Kidderminster.

3.1 *Setting and topography*

Due to the linear nature of the Conservation Area, and the length of the canal, as it winds through the District south-north, there are four principal and distinctly different settings and elements of topography, all of which assist in forming, and are equally important to, its character.

Commencing at Stourport-on-Severn, the canal winds north through the town, rising from the Basins area, covered by separate Conservation Areas. Urban in setting, there is a gradual interface between this and the rural character of the area between Stourport-on-Severn and Kidderminster. As the canal approaches Kidderminster, the character becomes more suburban and industrial, whilst again having a gradual interface between Kidderminster and the rural areas to the north and west.

The Area covers a distance of nearly 14.5 kilometres (9 miles), and rises about 15 metres from Lower Mitton Bridge, where the canal is about 30 metres above sea level to the edge of the District at Caunsall, at a height of about 45 metres above sea level

3.2 *Historic evolution*

The mid- to late Eighteenth Century saw the birth of the “Canal Age”, when the benefits of having inland waterways, linking the rivers of the country and the major centres of commerce and industry, together with the long-term cost and time benefits of haulage afforded by water transport, led to the creation of what is now recognised as one of the biggest periods of engineering feats of British history – canal building. What is widely recognised as the first true British canal and the start of this “Age”, was the Bridgewater Canal, serving the collieries at Worsley, the initiative of the Duke of Bridgewater, and engineered by James Brindley. This was completed in 1776.

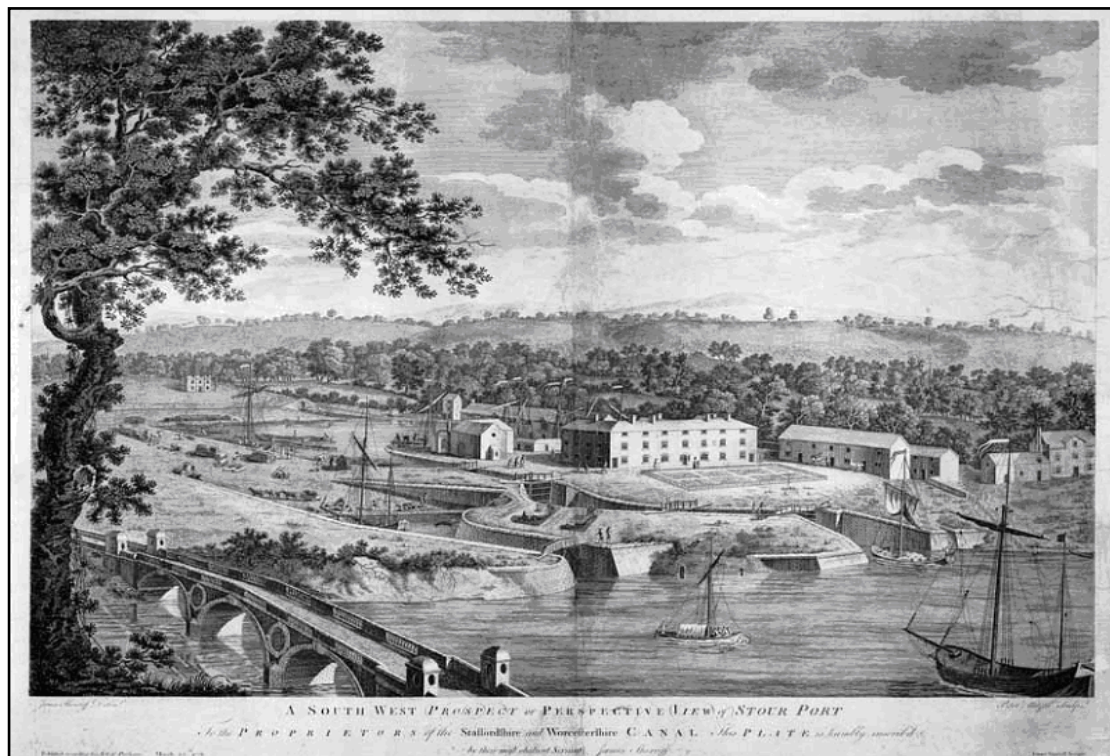
The subsequent 50 years saw canals, linking the growing industrial areas of the North and the Midlands with the sea and navigable rivers, promoted by merchants, who realised the benefits of cheap and reliable communication and (relatively) rapid transportation of goods throughout the country.

During the mid-Eighteenth Century, the pottery industries centred at Stoke-on-Trent, saw the benefits of an inland waterway linking the ports at Liverpool with the River Trent, and an Act of Parliament was passed in 1766 for the creation of what is now known as the Trent and Mersey Canal. Meanwhile, the benefits of a connecting canal between the Trent and Mersey Canal, and the River Severn were also identified. This led to a group of men, led by James Perry, to approach Parliament for the creation of what is now the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal. The Act of Parliament for this canal was passed on the same day as the Trent and Mersey Canal.

The work for the construction of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal

was supervised by Brindley, as part of his “Grand Cross”, linking the Mersey with Thames, and the Trent with the Severn. However, his assistants, Samuel Simcock and Thomas Dadford Snr carried out the engineering.

Costing somewhere in the region of between £100,000 and £110,000, the construction of the canal was started in 1766, and was finished between 1770 and 1771. The basin in Stourport was started in 1768, and finished in 1771, and by the 28 May 1772, the whole canal was reported to be open and in use. The Headquarters of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Company was established in 1772, in Wolverhampton, where it remained until the privatisation of the canal system and infrastructure in 1948. The first branch of the canal was opened in 1772, at Aldersley, linking the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal with the Birmingham Canal.



Etching of Stourport-on-Severn, Sherriff, 1776

The success of the canal can be seen through its expansion over the next half a century. The basins in Stourport-on-Severn were extended during the early 1800's allowing for a greater movement of more diverse boats and river traffic. Stourport-on-Severn was a prospering town at this time, and the clock mounted on what is now the Sailing Club was given to the Canal Company in 1812 by the town shows this and recognises of the symbiosis of the two parties.

However, soon after this, the downfall of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal can be seen to have started. Whilst various branches were built up until the 1840's, including the Hatherton branch in 1841, various other projects continued to threaten the profitability and viability of the canal. The completion of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal in 1815 permanently diverted traffic, including profitable coal, from the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, and in 1835, the opening of the link to the Birmingham and Liverpool Canal (Atherley to Nantwich) led to the loss of traffic from the Atherley to Great Haywood section.

1829 saw the opening of Lord Dudley's tram-road linking the coal pits near Kingswinford with the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal at Hinksford utilising a locomotive engine called Agenoria. Further to this, in 1838, the Grand Junction railway was opened, following the Birmingham and Liverpool Railroad bill in 1830.

Gradually, over the next century, the increased building and engineering of the railroad system throughout the country took its toll on the canal network. With the increased demand for speed and the larger loads needing to be carried meant many of the canals had to face the possibility of either widening their systems to take larger boats, or to risk losing trade to the railways. The eventual decline of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire as a commercial entity resulted in the Severn and Canal Carrying Co giving notice in 1914 to leave the warehouses in the Stourport-on-Severn basin because they could not get the bigger craft up the locks.

Along with other transport systems, the canals were nationalised in 1948, under the Transport Act. This resulted in the canals coming under the new Docks and Inland Waterways Executive (part of the British Transport Commission), trading under the name of British Waterways. In 1963, the British Transport Commission was split up, and British Waterways Board took over the control of the canals.

The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal ceased all commercial traffic around 1949, when the transportation of coal to the power station at Stourport-on-Severn by canal was stopped.

3.3 *Land-uses*

There are distinct differences in the land uses throughout the Conservation Area, and abutting the Area, due to the linear nature of the Conservation Area, and that it trails through varying elements of the District. These are as follows:

- a) The predominant land use within the boundary is now leisure, stemming from the usage of the canal itself, and other elements of the canal infrastructure, including Stack Pool in Kidderminster;
- b) Various public houses, originally associated with the canal, are present, and include the Lock at Wolverley, and the Bird in Hand, in Stourport-on-Severn. These are important elements, representing original stopping points and areas where residential use of the land arose through the industries associated with the canal;
- c) Most of the other buildings within the Area, although again originally associated with the canal, are now in private residential use. Again, many of these are important in forming the setting of the canal, and include lock-keepers cottages (Debdale lock, the Old Forge, north of Wolverley lock, Wolverley lock);
- d) Other elements, although infrequent, include the use of land near the Kidderminster viaduct, as a scrap yard; and the viaduct itself, for carrying the Severn Valley Railway across the canal. Whilst being outside of the Conservation Area the scrap-yard detracts from the character and appearance of the area, through the nature of the business, and the sheet metal fencing surrounding the site. The viaduct, however, gives some interesting irony to the setting of the canal, considering the history of the canal and the steam engine. The structure itself relates well to the architecture of bridges found along the length of the canal;
- e) Woodland, predominantly unmanaged, forms the boundary for the majority of the canal corridor. This is important for the setting of the Area, and helps separate areas of modern development such as highways from the peace and tranquillity now associated with the canal.



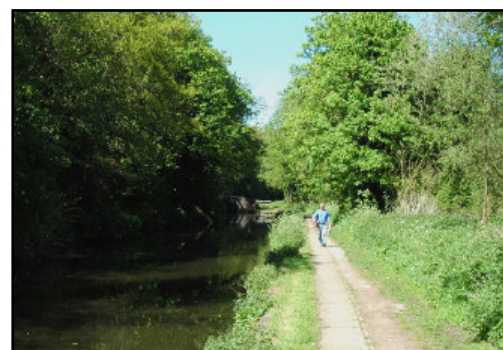
The Bird in Hand Public House, Stourport on Severn



Debdale Lock Cottage, Cookley



Severn Valley Railway Viaduct, Kidderminster

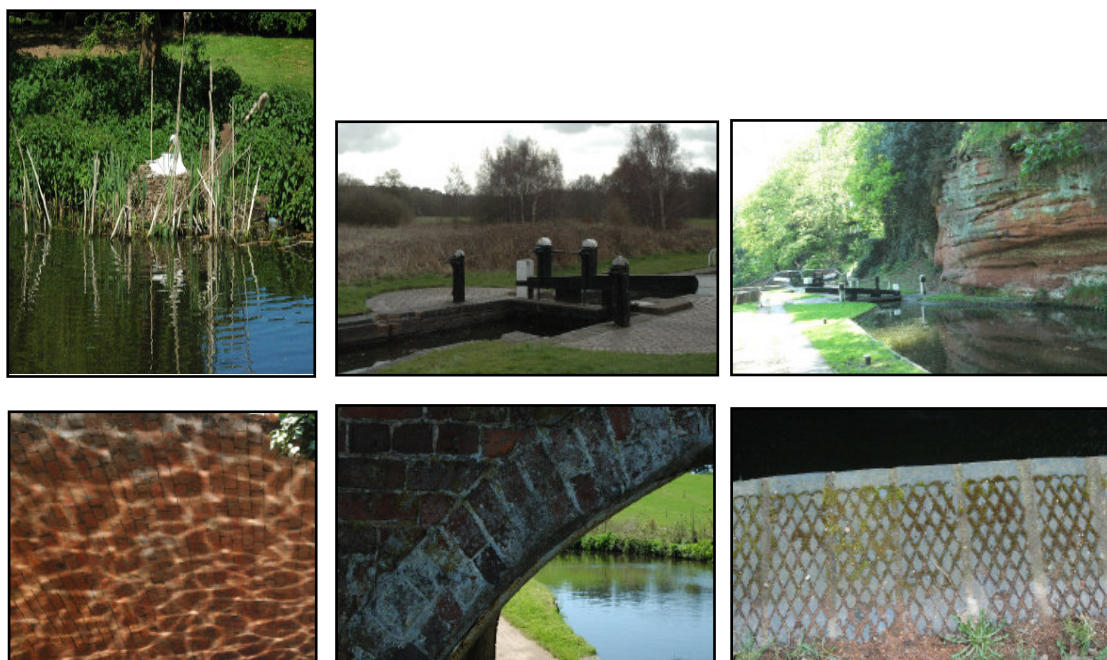


Approaching Falling Sands, Kidderminster

3.4 Colours

Colours within the Area change throughout the year, due to the natural, rural and urban surroundings. They are provided by:

- a) Canal water –this tends to be a murky green-brown, and helps to reflect the surroundings of the area;
- b) The kerbings and edging details of the canal are often blue engineering bricks, with a hatched pattern on them. These contrast heavily with the natural surroundings of the majority of the area, but define the edges of the canal accordingly, and should be considered as important features of the Area;
- c) Bridges and other similar structures are all constructed in a soft, light red brick. Again, whilst these contrast with the natural surroundings of much of the area, especially where these structures, such as bridges, are in more rural areas, they again lend character to the Area, and produce historic authenticity for the Area;
- d) Edges and surroundings of the canal and the area depend on the seasons, and vary from greens to yellows and browns. These arise from grasses, crops, and trees, and should be considered as strong visual contributors to the Area, and help define the character and nature of the Area through colour variations and interest throughout the seasonal cycles of the year;
- e) The local red sandstone features prominently throughout the Area, where the route of the canal has been cut through cliffs and strata. This lends a further natural colour to the Area;
- f) Locks play an important part of the canal, due to the rise of the land through which the canal cuts. These are painted in a black and white, and help to create visual continuity throughout both the Area, and further afield.



Examples of the various elements that provide colour within the area

3.5 *Climate*

Climate exerts a number of influences over the Area, and over views into and out of the area.

The surrounding countryside, creating the setting for the Area, and often giving rural views out of the Area, is heavily influenced by the climate, changing scenery, colours and views with the seasons.

With a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees lining the route of the canal, the colours of the trees throughout the year change, and alter the character and appearance of the Area, highlighting the nature of the seasons. In summer, the trees give cover to most of the canal, bathing it in dappled light, whereas in winter, much of this cover has gone, and the natural light can reach the canal more easily.



The surrounding countryside also plays an important element in terms of creating the wider setting of the canal. With much of the rural areas adjacent to the canal being agricultural, the crops and crop rotation alters the character and appearance of views into and out of the Area.

3.6 *Trees*

Trees play a vitally important part in the setting of the Conservation Area, and assist in creating and maintaining the rural character of the Area outside the urban sections of the canal, softening the urban townscape and creating a visual link between the rural and urban sections of the Area. Trees and hedges assist in adding colour variations and interest to the Area throughout the year.

The Conservation Area provides limited protection to trees within its boundaries, through the notification of intention of works process, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (section 211).



Trees are an important component within the Area



There are several Area Tree Preservation Orders whose boundaries overlap with that of the Conservation Area:

- TPO 37: The Larches, Kidderminster – this is a well-established area of trees situated between the canal and Larches Road. The wooded area contains a mix of trees including oak, sycamore, beech and chestnut. The aesthetic appeal of the area is enhanced through colour contrasts when the trees are in leaf. The interlocking branches of the mature trees produce the effect of a continuous canopy thereby giving a ‘dappled shade’ to the site floor. It is a prominent feature and provides a valuable public amenity.
- TPO 223: 4 Upper Lea Cottages, Lea Lane – this consists of one copper beech tree. It is significant in the local tree scape and can be seen from both the canal towpath and the Cookley to Wolverley Rd.
- TPO 227: Land at Round Hill, Park Lane, Kidderminster – two sections of the TPO boundary overlap with that of the Conservation Area. Firstly W1, a section of woodland, consisting of Oak, Lombardy poplar, Birch and Sycamore; and secondly a smaller group of trees (G1) consisting of Crack Willow, Birch and Sycamore. This area of trees provides an important recreational amenity and is a key visual element in the local landscape. It also provides an important screen between the properties in Park Lane and the Industrial units in the town centre.
- TPO 274: Canal Bank adjacent Stoney Lane Industrial Estate, Redsands Road, Kidderminster - whilst the TPO consists of two groups, and several individual trees, it is the boundary of the two groups that overlap with boundary of the Conservation Area. The trees present in the area include silver birch, weeping willows, crack willows, and hawthorn. The area provides important screening from the industrial estate buildings and their associated activities.
- TPO 287: Land at Wolverley Court, Wolverley Court, Wolverley – this consists of a variety of coniferous and deciduous tree species, of a diverse age range. It forms a prominent feature of the locality and can be seen from a wide range of public vantage points including the canal. Further, it provides an important contribution to the setting of the listed building.

Whilst all of the trees and hedges are important in helping to form the character and appearance of the area, the following identifies some of the more important, mostly native species of trees:

- Willow; hawthorn; hazel – these three species are generally found in hedges along the canal towpath, and in scrub on the opposite side of the towpath;
- Birch, oak and beech – these species tend to be more individual trees, although beech and birch form most of the tree corridor for the Area.

3.7 *Historic pattern and movement*

Due to the nature of the Canal, by virtue of it being a linear transportation link, the pattern and movement over the length of the canal has not altered since its creation. However, change has occurred through the times of movement, and the nature of this movement.

Originally constructed as a method of transportation for industry and goods, from its opening the canal was used as an important link between the Trent and Mersey Canal and the River Severn, and the numerous industries accessed from these waterways. The route of the canal was planned to assist in transport for various industrial settlements along or adjacent to its path, hence the weaving path of the canal. Industrial settlements such as the Falling Sands Tin plate works, the Oldington Iron and Brass Foundry Works, the Albion Iron foundry works, the Clensmore Iron Foundry, and a variety of carpet works all had good easy access to the canal, and utilised this as a principal means of transport for goods.

During the initial period of the canal usage, when used for industrial and commercial purposes, the canal was busy with traffic, initially during the hours of daylight, and then as competition and demand grew, during the evening and at certain times of the night.

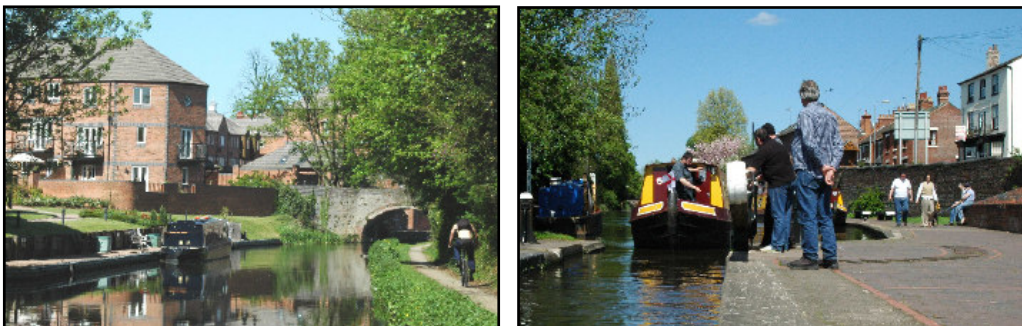
The focus of activity was inevitably at locks, stop-off points such as inns and toll-houses, and wharves, with the smaller bridges crossing the canal used for land workers, etc. Access to and from industrial centres, such as the Cookley Works and the Piano Building, were also areas of fairly high activity, where purpose built wharves to serve the sites can still be evidenced, but the majority of which have now been sealed off.



Timber Yard Dock, Kidderminster

The present-day use of the canal is much more leisure-based, with all the traffic along the waterway being pleasure-boats, or people who live on the canal. There has been an increase in recent years, both locally and nationally, in the tourism of canals, and people hiring boats for holidays. Whilst the peak of activity is over the summer months, some boating continues through the winter, although on a much reduced scale.

The canal path is also widely used for leisure activities, including angling, walking, cycling and for people wishing to travel between the villages and towns, instead of using the main highways and less attractive roads.



Both the canal and tow-path are now widely used for leisure based activities

3.8 *Illumination and night-time appearance*

There are no streetlights within the Area, helping to reduce the visual and physical clutter on the towpath, and assisting in retaining the character and appearance of the Area during the night.

Some lighting is present along certain areas of the canal, in particular through the town centres. Lighting along the wall to Tesco's car park in Kidderminster is present, although these have been subject to vandalism, due to their position and design. Other lighting comes from over-spill, from roads and car-parks adjacent to the canal, in particular from roads such as Stourport Road, in Kidderminster, Weavers Wharf, and St Mary's Ringway.

The lack of illumination throughout the majority of the area assists in retaining the character of area through evening and night, and should be considered as Important for wildlife, and in harmonising the man-made with the natural environments.

3.9 *Views*

a) *Into the Area*

The principle views into the Area are generally restricted to areas of public activity, including bridges serving roads, including Mitton Bridge, and St Mary's Ringway, and car-parks. From all of these, the views are looking down into the canal corridor, and the eye tends to be drawn along the corridor, the character of which is emphasised by the canal-side development.



*View into the Area from St. Mary's Ringway,
Kidderminster*

Throughout the more rural areas of the canal, views are generally restricted, predominantly due to the lack of access. Trees, and the level of the canal, restrict views into the Area, although canal structures such as locks and bridges are often seen from distances, giving some definition to the canal corridor from outside the Area.

b) Out of the Area

There are four distinct areas of the Canal Conservation Area, each giving different views out of the Area, with different settings.

Firstly, the start of the Conservation Area at Stourport-on-Severn, where the predominant view is that of the edge of the townscape, albeit with many of the buildings backing on to the canal. Many of the buildings have associations with the canal, and with its history, whether public houses, or warehouses and canal buildings. From the start, the buildings form a frame for the view, assisted with elements such as the Brindley Bridge, carrying ones eye up the canal corridor. Glimpses of the River Stour can be gained, although this is more on the edge of the town, when the canal starts heading in to the second area, more rural in its character.



View out of the Area from Brindley Bridge, Stourport-on-Severn

The interface between this and the second, more rural, element is gradual, with the presence of buildings becoming less imposing on the canal, starting with the houses being set further back, and the back gardens edging onto the canal, until the buildings punctuate the rural character, such as the Bird in the Hand PH. From here onwards, the northwest side of the canal is very overgrown, with a steep bank covered in trees, hiding most of surrounding countryside, and limiting the view. However, the presence of trees assists in forming the character, and the setting of the canal. The southeast side of the canal does not have the same presence of trees. Whilst they are still present, glimpses over to Wilden, especially the new industrial park, can be gained, across a mix of agricultural land, and Wilden Marsh, a SSSI. Occasional agricultural buildings can be seen, and views over to Wilden Top, covered in trees, relates well to the northwestern side of the canal, emphasising the importance of trees on the setting.



View out of the Area to Wilden Top

The approach into Kidderminster, the second urban element of the canal, is again gradual, with the views outside of the area becoming restricted, partially through sandstone cliffs, and banks covered in trees on the northern side, to a corridor of trees on the southern side, surrounding the River Stour. This corridor

effect is emphasised by the views of the viaduct, and the solid fencing of the scrap yard. It is not until passing underneath Round Hill Bridge that the urban environment of Kidderminster replaces the more rural environment present between the two towns. A small section of residential units present a built up aspect to the western side of the canal, whereas palisade fencing on the east side presents a limited view. The building stock from hereon is far more commercial and industrial. North-lights can be seen from the timber yard on the eastern side of the canal, mimicked by the roof-scape of Tescos. The predominant view here is of the car-park and other buildings, including those of Weavers Wharf. Views can also be gained of the roof-scape of other parts of Kidderminster, reflecting the valley topography of Kidderminster. St Mary's Church can be seen from many parts of the canal at this stage, dominating the rest of the townscape. From the St Mary's tunnel onwards, the views are mixed again, creating a gradual interface between the urban environment of Kidderminster, and the more rural environment of the canal heading towards Wolverley. Puxton marsh, to the west of the canal, greatly assists in this, placing the residential area of Puxton away from the canal corridor.



View out of the Area approaching Kidderminster looking north



View out of the Area at Kidderminster looking south

The final area is far more rural, starting with views out to Wolverley, with St John the Baptists church piercing the skyline, across field systems, to the northwest. The east side of the canal is more banked up, covered in trees, with glimpses through to Lea Lane, and occasionally opening out to wider views of woods and more residential areas, including cottages on Lea Lane, and Austcliffe Caravan park, and occasional industrial settlements, such as the Cookley Works.



View out of the Area towards St John the Baptists church at Wolverley

3.10 *Pattern and density of building*

The pattern and density of building within the Area is as follows:

- In the more urban areas of the Area, the buildings mainly adjoin roads, or footpaths, and often either back directly onto the canal or are slightly set back from the Area.
- In both Stourport-on-Severn and Kidderminster, the density of buildings is relatively high, although there is distinct phasing between these areas, and the more rural areas in between, where the density of buildings gradually reduces;
- Of the buildings within the Area, many of these are originally canal-related buildings, such as the Debdale Lockhouse, the Lock Public House at Wolverley, and Upper Lea Cottages. Other types of buildings lying within the boundary, or on the edge are often industrial in their origins, including the forge works at Stack Pool, Redsands Estate and the Cookley Works.

3.11 *Type of building and uses*

The types of building in, and on the edge of, the Area is as follows:

- a) The predominant type of building is of industrial form and use, with some commercial buildings, or industrial buildings converted to commercial, especially at the start of the Area in Stourport-on-Severn. These include 2 and 2a Foundry Street, the Piano Building, and the Cookley Works
- b) Buildings constructed to serve the infrastructure of the canal are scattered along the Area, including bridges, the various public houses, and lock cottages, such as the Lock PH at Wolverley, the Debdale Lock Cottage, and 75 Manor Road on the edge of Stourport-on-Severn.
- c) Other buildings and structures include the rock-cut caves at Debdale, constructed to serve the canal, and which have slight parallels with the cave-houses found within the locality.



Redsands Estate, Kidderminster



Debdale rock-cut cave, Debdale

3.12 *Style of buildings*

The style of the buildings within the Area arises from the types of buildings present, and their original uses. Predominantly constructed in white-painted red brick, with blue brick dressings, some characteristics can be seen throughout the Area, including curved walls to the edges of buildings, such as that at the Bird in Hand PH, and the Wolverley lock cottage



Bird in Hand Public House, Stourport-on-Severn

The more industrial buildings are generally either one or two storey high, and were generally constructed to be served by the canal. No particular architectural style is dominant here.

Domestic and commercial buildings, such as public houses, tend to be more formal, many in either a Georgian and Victorian vernacular, including cottages, and lock houses.

3.13 *Materials and construction*

a) Walls

The exterior fabric of buildings within, and adjacent to the boundary of the Area can be characterised as follows:

- Predominantly 9" brick, varying in colour from deep plum to orange red, laid in a Flemish bond, with creamy white lime mortar. Blue bricks are present, but mostly used for detailing to windows or stringcourses. Many buildings are painted white.
- Detailing, including corbelling and rounded corners on buildings can be identified, such as at the Bird in Hand PH, in Stourport-on-Severn.

b) Roofs

The roofs to buildings and structures within the Area are characterised as follows:

- Principal roofs are low to medium angled hips or gables;
- Mostly clad with curved hand-made clay tiles, where original tiles remain, or where these have been replaced, more often with a flat modern replacement. Some blue Welsh slate is present;
- Few roofs have additional piercings, such as roof-lights;
- Chimney stacks are present on most of the more historic buildings, rising from the roof structure;

c) Windows

Windows within the area vary depending on the original use of the building, and the following types can be identified within the Area:

- Cast iron frames, incorporating small lights, are present on most of the historic industrial and commercial buildings, both within the Area, and abutting the Area. These range in style and form, from squared frames, with simple timber or brick lintels, to curved arched windows, with rubbed brick voissiours;
- The domestic buildings, including public houses, tend to have timber-framed windows, but few buildings retain their original windows or fenestration, to the detriment of the Area. Sash windows can be identified within the Area, but more commonly are side-hung casement windows. Timber windows tend to be either painted white or black, to contrast with the white paint of the brickwork.



A selection of windows found within the Area

Other important elements along the canal include the various bridges and locks. The locks are uniform in colour, materials, and construction, with timber paddles, painted black and white, and constructed in red brick. Copings vary from sandstone to diamond patterned blue engineering bricks. Bridges are predominantly constructed either in timber, painted black and white, or in an orange red brick, laid with a creamy white mortar in either Flemish or English Bond. Sandstone copings are present on many of the brick bridges. Other bridges and tunnels are more modern, and are constructed in concrete, such as the St Mary's tunnel.

3.14 *Survival of architectural features*

Due to the modern history of the canal network, and the upsurge in their use, albeit for predominantly leisure use, many of the architectural features associated with the canal still remain, either in their original form, or as modern replacements. These include:

Locks – these are a vital element of the canal, enabling traffic to move up and down the full length of the canal, irrespective of the changing of levels of the surrounding countryside. These are continually maintained by British Waterways.

Bridges – again, these are important elements of the canal. Many of these are still present, and several modern bridges have been added along the length of the Canal, including the Brindley Bridge, at Stourport-on-Severn, and the Mitton Chapel Bridge (no.7).



Brindley Bridge



Mitton Chapel Bridge (no.7)

Towpath – this is still present along the canal, although several different surface treatments are visible. From Stourport-on-Severn through to Kidderminster, the towpath is covered in a pea gravel, whereas in other areas, for example from Kidderminster to Wolverley, the towpath is bare earth, the path created by walkers and cyclists. Other treatments include red and blue pavements, for example around the Wolverley Lock.

Canal edgings –these vary between the traditional blue engineering brick, with wire crosses, to more modern, and less sympathetic corrugated steel sheeting.



Examples of canal edgings within the Area

Moorings are still present along the length of the canal, either individually, associated with houses and buildings, or in wharfs, such as Round Hill Wharf.

Private wharves - the entrances to some wharves can still be identified, as they go in to particular sites or under certain buildings. Examples of these can be seen both under the bridge between the Piano Building in Kidderminster and the canal, and at the Cookley Works, under the footbridge before the tunnel.

3.15 Landmarks, focal points and special features

a) Landmarks:

Landmarks are buildings and structures or other features that are important because of their size, design or position makes them particularly noticeable. Special care is needed in the treatment of landmarks.

Landmarks within the Area are as follows:

Canal related buildings and structures - many of the canal buildings, locks, bridges and tunnels form important landmarks, due to their design, structure and purpose. Included should be:

Cookley tunnel	Lower Mitton Bridge
Debdale lock, and caves	St Mary's lock and tunnel
Wolverley lock, & Lock PH	Caldwell lock
Wolverley Court lock & bridge	Viaduct
Stackpool chimney	Brindley Bridge

Non-canal related buildings and structures – all these buildings form important landmarks, due to their position, often either in elevated positions, or being sited in, and contrasting with, their rural surroundings:

14-28 Bridge Road, Cookley	Bird in Hand PH
Upper Lea Cottages	75 Manor Road
Lea House, Lea Lane	St Mary's Church



St Mary's Church, Kidderminster is a landmark within the Area

b) Focal points:

Focal points are buildings, structures or areas that are important because of their position in view lines, or because they are the centre of well-frequented public activity. Special care is needed in the treatment of focal points because they are particularly noticeable to the public.

The entire Area may be considered as a focal point, because of its function and use as a leisure and activity destination, and many focal points lie outside the Area, due to the distant views afforded along the length of the Canal, but it contains individual focal points as follows:

Lock structures and buildings

- Cookley tunnel – with the canal disappearing into the hillside, the tunnel forms an important and strong visual focal point;
- Debdale Lock, bridge and house – these, individually and as a group form a strong visual focal point, being relatively large structures in strong rural surroundings;
- Wolverley Court lock and bridge – similar to Debdale lock and house, these two structures form important and strong visual focal points in rural surroundings;
- Wolverley lock and bridge – again, these form important and strong visual focal points, emphasised by the glimpses and sounds of people and road traffic;
- St Mary's lock and tunnel – as with Wolverley Court lock and bridge, these form strong visual focal points, emphasised by the sound and sight of road traffic and human activity. They also form important physical focal points, giving access to and from the canal, to the surrounding shops and road network;
- Caldwell lock – as with other locks, this is a strong visual focal point in semi-rural surroundings;
- Falling Sands lock and bridge – similarly to other locks and bridges, these form strong visual focal points;
- Brindley bridge – sited at the end of a long straight section of canal, before a sharp corner, this bridge forms a strong visual focal point within Stourport-on-Severn;
- Lower Mitton Bridge – forming the end boundary of the Conservation Area, and heavy in aesthetic terms, constructed in concrete, this forms both an important visual and physical focal point, similar to both St Mary's tunnel and lock, and Wolverley lock and bridge.



Debdale lock, bridge and house



*St Mary's lock,
Kidderminster*

Other buildings and structures

- Upper Lea Cottages – due to the colour and relative size of the buildings, and their position surrounded by trees and in a rural environment, these form important and strong visual focal points;
- 14-28 Bridge Road, Cookley – these form a very strong visual focal point when travelling towards Stourport-on-Severn, by virtue of their position in the landscape, positioned on the brow of the hill, towering above the canal;
- Lea House – as with Upper Lea Cottages, due to the proximity to the canal, and that it is a solitary building, this forms an important visual focal point along the canal corridor;
- Lock PH – as a busy public house, and sited on a main road, above the canal, this forms both an important visual focal point, and a strong and important social focal point;
- 75 Manor Road – due its size, prominence and position in relation to the canal, this building forms an important focal point on a long corner section of the canal;
- Bird in Hand – as a busy public house on the edge of the canal corridor, and the only building in this area adjacent to the canal, this again forms an important visual and social focal point.



Upper Lea Cottages, Kidderminster



The sandstone cliffs along the length of the Area, due to their vibrant colour, piercing the green and brown of the surrounding countryside and woodland, also form very important, strong and natural visual focal points.

c) Special Features:

The Area contains seven Statutory List Entries, equating to 10 Listed Buildings and structures; other buildings have been identified as being of local interest, through the Local Lists for both Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn, although these lists are not comprehensive. Other buildings outside of these areas are also considered as being of interest, although these are in areas where the Local List has not been undertaken as yet.

Some of these buildings identified as being of Local interest have been the subject of some unsympathetic alterations, including the replacement of windows and doors. Generally, every effort should be made to retain the built fabric within the Area, and directly outside the Area, dating from the Eighteen and Nineteenth Centuries in particular.

Particular special features in the Area include the following:

Bridges and Tunnels



Austcliffe Bridge



Caunsall Bridge



Caldwall Bridge



Wolverley Court Bridge



Falling Sands Bridge & Severn Valley Railway Viaduct



Cookley Tunnel

Brindley Bridge
Limekiln Bridge
Upper Mitton Bridge
Old Forge Cottage Bridge
Cookley Works Footbridge
Caldwall Mill Bridge
Debdale Bridge

Bridge by Pumping Station
St Mary's tunnel
Oldington Lane Bridge
Longboat Lane Bridge
Calwall Hall Bridge
Mitton Chapel Bridge

Locks and associated structures



Wolverley Court lock and overflow



Debdale lock



St Mary's lock



St Mary's crane and bollards

Oldington Lane adjacent sluice
Clensmore wharf
Stackpool Chimney
Caldwall lock and overflow
Cookley works wharf

Caunsall sluice
Lock by pumping station
Falling Sands sluice
Round Hill wharf
Piano building wharf

Listed Buildings and Structures

12 & 12a Foundry Street, Stourport-on-Severn
13 Foundry Street, Stourport-on-Severn
14 Foundry Street, Stourport-on-Severn
15-18 Foundry Street, Stourport-on-Severn
50 Lombard Street (Rising Star PH)
Clay House Bridge (No.25)

Other buildings and structures

6-7 Holly Road (Canalside)
The Bird In Hand PH, 5 Holly Road
75-77 Manor Road
Upper Lea Cottages
Old Forge Cottage, off Lea Lane

Caves at Debdale lock
Gilgal Canal Wall
Smithy nr Wolverley lock
Riverside Cottage, off Lea Lane
Debdale lock house

Again, the sandstone cuttings and cliffs should all be considered as special features, due to their positive impact on the setting, character and appearance on the Area. Similarly, sandstone walls, such as that to the rear of the garages on Vale Road and the Gilgal, should also be considered as special features, due to their being historic sections of canal walling.



Sandstone wall at Gilgal

3.16 *Ground surfaces*

Ground surfaces vary throughout the Area, but can be described as follows:

- Towpath between Stourport-on-Severn and Kidderminster – this is predominantly a light yellow coloured compacted gravel.
- Towpath from Kidderminster onwards – this is predominantly natural earth, the path of which has worn with use.
- Locks – the area surrounding the locks generally have a mix of red and blue engineering brick detail;
- Banks and side of path – this is generally grassed, and assists in softening the harder landscaping, to the benefit of the character of the Area.

3.17 *Hard landscaping/ street furniture*

- Boundary walls – whilst many of the boundaries of properties backing onto the Area either have hedging or are open, there are several walls within and adjacent to the boundary of the Area. For example, the sandstone wall running along the Gilgal in Stourport is an historic wall, in typical local material. This should be considered as having a positive impact on the Area, not only through its separation of the Area from the Gilgal traffic, but also from its historic appearance and materials. Other walls include the dwarf retaining wall to Tesco's car park in Kidderminster, and the dwarf wall and wall to the building of Sainsburys, also in Kidderminster. Whilst neither of these have a detrimental impact on the character of the Area, they do not conserve or enhance the setting of the canal, due to inappropriate brick being used in both instances.
- Blue brick setts around locks – these are generally wire-crossed engineering blue bricks, similar to those found elsewhere within the Area.



*Old Forge Cottage retaining wall,
Wolverley*

- Finger posts – these are generally constructed in timber, giving a more natural feel to the signs, and sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Area. However, these are also prone to vandalism, with examples being either broken, or set light to.
- Seating – there are various seats along the length of the canal. These are often simple timber benches, sympathetic to the character and appearance of the area.
- Weir and overflows – these are often constructed in dark red and/or blue brick, with a creamy white lime mortar, often with metal detailing inside.



Examples of hard landscaping present in the Area

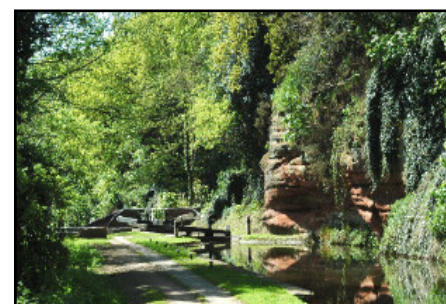
3.18 *Tranquil areas and active areas*

Whilst the whole of the Area can be considered as an active area, due to being a transport corridor, both the areas within Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn should be considered as active areas. Their proximity to the town centres, roads, and residential areas all combine to create centres of activity.



Example of an active area, St Mary's Lock, Kidderminster

More tranquil areas can be identified in the two rural areas. Due to the lack of human activity in these areas, the atmosphere and ambience is more peaceful and tranquil. This is greatly assisted through the corridor of trees, and the immediate presence of agricultural land, and marshland.



Example of a tranquil area, Falling Sands Lock, Kidderminster

However, these areas are not distinct, and there is no immediate transition. There are also tranquil areas of the canal within the towns, such as the area around Longboat Lane in Stourport-on-Severn, from Limekiln bridge through the edge of Puxton Marsh in Kidderminster

3.19 *Noise*

The noise within the Area varies greatly depending on the locality. The more urban areas, as would be expected, are full of traffic noises, from the roads in the vicinity of the Area, and the sound of human voice. All this represents the activity that surrounds the Area in these areas, and emphasises the role in which the waterway now plays in the development of the towns.

The more rural areas tend to be much quieter, with the principal noises arising from the birdsong, varying dependant on the area and the season. Hedge and Tree sparrow, blackbird, and wood pigeon are amongst the common songs throughout the year. Other birds such as Kingfisher, rook, swan, Canada goose, mallard, and white duck are also present and contribute to the birdsong. The sound of water can be heard, as can the sound of trees. Other important noises arise from human activity, such as dog walking, walking, cycling, and the sound of diesel engines of the canal boats.

3.20 *Alien features*

There are several alien features within the Area, and abutting the Area, which have detrimental impacts on the character and appearance of this important historic Conservation Area.

Several modern developments have incorporated features such as projecting crane lofts, as at Parkes Quay and Round Hill Wharf. Whilst these may be found along other canal networks, these types of detail are not typical of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal network, or of the Conservation Area.

The railings and bridge abutments for Lime Kiln Bridge, originally brick but now in sheet metal and covered in graffiti, detract from the Area, through the use of inappropriate materials.

The scrapyards to the north of the Severn Valley Railway Viaduct in Kidderminster, abutts the Conservation Area. The 2m high corrugated sheet fencing surrounding the site does nothing to preserve or enhance the Area and is considered to be alien.

The caravan park at Austcliffe, near Cookley whilst outside the Area, abuts the boundary, and due to its position and openness, impacts heavily on this part of the Conservation Area.

4.0 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area is a linear Conservation Area, covering the canal, towpath, and associated structures within the Wyre Forest District. The Area passes through a variety of settings, from the urban settings of Stourport-on-Severn and Kidderminster, to the more

rural areas and settings of the District. A symbiotic relationship has been built up over the history of the canal with its surroundings, where the canal and structures have played a part in forming the settlements due to its path, and likewise, the settlements, countryside and topography had an impact on the design and route of the canal.

Whilst the uses and public treatment of the canal has altered since its construction, the character and appearance of the canal retains its historic character and many of its historic features, including buildings and structures.