CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

DOSTHILL

On behalf of

TAMWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

CgMs Ref: SW/SH/8898

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1.0 **Introduction and Planning Policy Context**

1.1 Section 69 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* places a duty on every local planning authority to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Such areas can then be designated as conservation areas.

1.2 The Act also states that local planning authorities should, from time to time, review their existing conservation areas and formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas.

1.3 Essentially, the added planning controls that conservation area designation brings include controls over demolition, strengthened controls over minor development and the protection of trees. Within the Tamworth Local Plan (2001-2011, adopted July 2006), policies ENV22 and ENV23 concern conservation areas.

1.4 The appraisal defines the special interest of the Dosthill Conservation Area and includes proposals for enhancement of its character and appearance. The more clearly the special interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder will be the basis for development plan policies, development control decisions and proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character of an area. A detailed survey of the area was carried out by staff of CgMs Ltd in September and October 2007.

1.5 It is intended that this guidance will be useful for residents, developers and the general public in understanding the significance of the area and will help to ensure its special interest and character can be preserved and enhanced for future generations. This document follows English Heritage’s 2006 guidance on the production of conservation area appraisals and is intended to:

- Assist in defining what is of ‘special’ architectural or historic importance
- Give recommendations on features and characteristics that should be protected
• Identify possible areas for future enhancement within the designated area

• Provide guidance on the form, style and location of future change and development within the designated area.

2.0 Overview of the Conservation Area

2.1 The set of plans in Appendix 2 aims to identify the elements which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and also illustrate recommendations for alterations to the conservation area boundary and for additional designations.

2.2 Plan 1 shows the existing conservation area boundary and statutorily listed buildings (buildings identified by English Heritage as being of special architectural or historic interest). Plan 2 shows proposed amendments to the conservation area boundary, significant views, important trees, important open spaces, walls, railings or hedges of note, and ‘enhancement’ sites.

2.3 ‘Important’ trees are also identified. These are usually highly visible from public places and/or they contribute to the setting of a listed building, the street scene or a building of local note. Important open spaces are also marked on Plan 2, as these can play a significant role in the character of an area. Character is defined not just by buildings, walls and trees, but also by the spaces between them. These contribute to the setting of buildings. Open spaces allow views around the area and they are often an important element in telling the story of the historical development of a community.

2.4 Important unlisted walls and other forms of boundary enclosure, such as railings or hedges, are recognised. These are usually built of local materials and help to define spaces and frame views. Significant views into, out of and around the proposed conservation area are also identified for it should be appreciated that a conservation area’s character does not necessarily end with a line drawn on a map. Often the character is closely associated with attractive views and vistas out to other areas, sometimes via gaps between buildings, along streets or across open spaces. Views within an area such as that to a church, school or other landmark building can also be particularly valuable.
DOSTHILL CONSERVATION AREA

3.0 Introduction and General Character Summary

3.1 The village of Dosthill lies about 2.5 miles south of the town of Tamworth. The Dosthill Conservation Area is in the village, off the A51 west of the High Street. It was designated in July 1985 and subsequently reviewed in September 1997, when it was considered that the original boundaries were still relevant and appropriate. The focus of the designated area is the Grade II listed St. Paul’s Church, the Grade II* Norman Chapel, and the Church Farm complex, which contains various Grade II listed buildings.

3.2 The conservation area is bounded to the north by a public footpath off Wigford Road, which leads west into a former quarry, now a lake with water sports facilities. The boundary crosses Wigford Road and continues along the northern side of No. 32. The eastern boundary runs along the back gardens of Nos. 32 & 30, continuing behind the modern St. Paul’s Court residential development and the Church Farm Mews development. The southern boundary returns around the latter and includes Field House. The boundary then continues west around the side of St. Paul’s Church. The western boundary runs alongside the edge of the churchyard, along the top of the former quarry pit to the west.

3.3 The area has a long history as a settlement, as evidenced by the surviving 12th-century chapel. Some of its semi-rural village character has remained, especially to the west, but the area’s new residential developments have significantly eroded its once rural atmosphere.

3.4 The conservation area can be subdivided into three distinct ‘character zones’. The western part, focused around the church, with its chapel and green and leafy churchyard, is very different from the modern St. Paul’s Court development and the Church Farm Mews development which is centred on the historic farmstead, with its timber-framed barns.
4.0 Summary History of the Area

*Historic Ordnance Survey mapping is included at Appendix 1*

4.1 Dosthill is a small ancient settlement recorded in the Domesday Book. It has been identified with the 2 hides in ‘Dercelai’ held in pledge in 1086 by Robert de Olgi of Turchil and which Untain had held in the time of King Edward. Hugh son of Richard, who held Amington manor, held a knight’s fee here in about 1135 of the Earl of Warwick. By 1166 this was in the hands of the earl’s successor William de Newburgh, whose descendants held the over-lordship here until at least 1401. By 1414 both the Warwick and Burdet lordships had come to an end, Dosthill subsequently being held by the Lords Hastings or the Greys of Ruthin along with Mancetter.

4.2 The manor of Dosthill changed hands a multitude of times over the following centuries, experiencing periods of both wealth and decline.

4.3 The settlement was based upon agriculture and in the late 18th and 19th centuries the village developed with the building of a number of farms and cottages.

4.4 Later accounts of Dosthill describe it as a village or hamlet in the parish of Kingsbury, and as a centre of brick-making and coalmining. There are also diorite outcrops at Dosthill, known locally as Dosthill granite, which were formerly quarried for use as road stone. The large Dosthill Quarry, west of St. Paul’s Church, has now been flooded and is utilised by a scuba diving centre.

4.5 The oldest building by many hundreds of years is the Norman chapel, built in the 12th century and now listed at Grade II*. Evidence for the later medieval period comes from the Cruck barn at Church Farm, which dates from the 14th or 15th century. The farmhouse itself and another barn are of 17th-century origin. Two nearby cottages also show the remains of 17th-century timber framing.

4.6 Dosthill House/Hall (outside the conservation area) is also a building of local significance. This Georgian mansion was originally owned by Sir Robert Peel and also by the Tolson family. The building and grounds have now been restored and converted into a number of apartments.
4.7 St. Paul’s church, just southwest of the chapel, was built in the late 19th century in the Gothic Revival style by E. Holmes of Birmingham.

4.8 The 1884 Ordnance Survey (O.S.) map shows that in the late 19th century Dosthill was still very much a small agricultural settlement. St. Paul’s Church stood within a very small churchyard and the land to the west had not yet been disturbed by quarrying. Church Farm was a working farm with the farmhouse fronting Wigford Road and the farm buildings and yard behind. This arrangement was mirrored on the west side of the road by Dosthill Farm. The land north, south and east of Church Farm remained undeveloped.

4.9 During the first half of the 20th century, the Dosthill Granite Quarry rapidly spread across the land west of the church; by 1956 it was disused but covered a large area. The churchyard expanded between 1924 and 1956 and again between 1956 and 1974. It was in the 1960s that the area’s character changed most dramatically. Dosthill Farm was demolished and redeveloped with housing and new housing had spread over land north, south and east of Church Farm, including on land formerly belonging to the farm, in a massive residential expansion of the original village.

4.10 Today, the old road pattern is still largely intact. The Church Farm complex has been converted to residential use and north of it is the relatively recent St. Paul’s Court housing development.
5.0 Appraisal

5.1 The Church and Church Road

General Character, Spaces, Views and Uses

5.1.1 The principal focus of the conservation area is the church, chapel and churchyard. The green open spaces and attractive mature trees around the church have preserved part of a landscape which has otherwise been lost to new development.

5.1.2 St. Paul’s Church is orientated east-west and is therefore prominent in views north along Church Road as it curves gently eastwards. The church, built in early English style, has an attractive small splayed spire. The churchyard is accessed via an ornate arched wrought iron commemorative gateway with central lantern. The churchyard has open views across its length and is surrounded by a low thick holly hedge to the south and east, and a rather unattractive and over-engineered steel boundary fence to the north. The churchyard, well maintained with mown grass, is in use with many recent burials. The Norman chapel is enclosed within the graveyard and is accompanied by a small, characterless, brick-built toilet block.

5.1.3 North of the church lies an unused, gravel-surfaced plot of land, which does not make a positive contribution to the conservation area. This land leads down to the former Dosthill Quarry, now a picturesque lake utilised for diving (outside the conservation area).

The gravel yard and Scuba Diving Lake
5.1.4 Church Road gently meanders around the church and heads north where it turns into Wigford Road. Nos. 30 and 32 Church Road are located in large plots set back off the road to the northeast of the church and are not fully visible from the road.

**Architectural Quality of Buildings and Building Materials/Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings**

5.1.5 The Grade II listed St. Paul’s Church was built in 1870-72 to the designs of Birmingham architect Edward Holmes. The Early English style church is constructed of ashlar blocks with a tiled roof and has an interesting and rather quirky spire, capping a buttressed single-storey projection on its south side.

![St. Paul’s Church](image)

5.1.6 The 12th-century Grade II* listed chapel is located northeast of the church. It is constructed of dressed square stone with ashlar dressings, with brick additions visible in the east gable end. The chapel, now a parish room, has undergone many significant alterations ranging from the 17th century to the 20th century, including a partially rebuilt east wall, but still retains its ancient character.
5.1.7 No. 32 (Arboury) Church Road, is a brick-built Edwardian house of modest proportions. The house is set back off the road behind a tall brick wall, its roof and chimney stacks the only elements visible from the road. No. 32’s rear garden forms the northeastern boundary of the conservation area and again is invisible from the public realm, although a number of tall conifers are visible separating the garden from the public footpath which runs along the side of the house. The lower garden still remains as an old orchard area.

5.1.8 No. 30 Church Road is a cottage of probably late 19th-century date, of simple design with two dormer windows and a central porch. It may be earlier but has been altered, is rendered and has replacement windows. The property is also set back from the road, and views can only be glimpsed down the driveway between the garden’s large conifers.
Negative Features

5.1.9 The churchyard is unfortunate in its western and northern boundaries. While it is accepted that safety fencing is necessary along the top of the quarry along the western boundary, the utilitarian steel railings along the north side are both unattractive and inappropriate and detract from the character and appearance of the two listed buildings behind. Similarly, the utilitarian style of the shorter section of steel railings adjoining the chapel is not appropriate in this location.

5.1.10 The red brick toilet block situated immediately west of the 12th-century chapel provides a function but its construction, so close to the chapel, was insensitive to the character of this important building.

The inappropriate railings and insensitive brick toilet block
**General Condition and Capacity for Change**

5.1.11 The buildings and churchyard are well maintained and in good condition. The holly boundary hedge could be extended to the north and the steel railings removed and replaced with something more appropriate. The tall security fencing to the west of the churchyard is a necessity but could be disguised, possibly by hedge planting.
5.2  **St. Paul’s Court**

**General Character, Spaces, Views and Uses**

5.2.1  St. Paul’s Court is a modern housing development (constructed within the last 15 years) situated to the east of the church. The houses, all built of brick with gables and weatherboarded half dormers make the new development an obviously modern addition to the conservation area. Although not unattractive examples of new houses, the development lacks any historical or architectural importance, and there is no real justification for retaining it within the conservation area boundary.

5.2.2  The cul-de-sac is made up of four modern houses with separate garage blocks. The road, constructed of small modern mixed pavers, is edged with grass which makes up front gardens, with conifers dotted throughout the site. Views are restricted within the site but there is an important view west out of the development to the 12th-century chapel.

**Architectural Quality of Buildings and Building Materials/Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings**

5.2.3  The buildings, constructed of mixed red brick with gables and weather boarded half dormers, have attempted to tie in with the Church Farm Mews development. Field House, south of Church Farm House, is of the same design and materials.

![Examples of the properties in St. Paul’s Court](image)

5.2.4  St. Paul’s Court has integrated some older buildings into the development; these are Nos. 4-6, which are shown on the 1884 O.S. map, and which probably comprised a
former house and row of small cottages or outbuildings. The long narrow range of Nos. 4-5 is of interesting appearance, of narrow plan and having steeply pitched roofs and only one window opening in the long southern elevation which ‘kinks’ out in the middle. The original boundary wall between these buildings and Church Farm appears to have been moved to accommodate a widened vehicle access into the latter.

Nos. 4-5, older properties integrated into St. Paul’s Court

Negative Features

5.2.5 The new buildings, despite some attention to building materials and design, have created a rather characterless development with no obvious relationship to the conservation area in which they are located.

General Condition and Capacity for Change

5.2.6 The properties and open public spaces are well maintained. There is little capacity for change and it is questionable whether St. Paul’s Court should be included in the conservation area at all.
5.3 Church Farm Mews

General Character, Spaces, Views and Uses

5.3.1 Church Farm Mews is a conversion to residential use of the former Church Farm complex, carried out in 1990. It includes Church Farmhouse, Hawthornes Cottage, a 17th-century barn, a 15th-century Cruck barn, and a complex of further farm buildings around a second former farmyard to the east.

5.3.2 Unfortunately, the conversion has meant an almost entire loss of the farmstead’s original character. The two barns and the intact original configuration of the buildings, around two open spaces, are the only obvious markers of the site’s previous use.

5.3.3 The eastern ‘courtyard’ of buildings, is made up of ‘Barn View’, ‘The Retreat’, ‘Cornerways’ and ‘The Stables’. None is particularly architecturally interesting and all have undergone significant or total alteration. The hard landscaping between the properties is typical of a new housing development and has made little effort to link to the former farmyard – a token old plough at the rear of Church Farm House is a rather weak suggestion of the area’s previous use.

5.3.4 Despite the modern conversion, however, the view looking south along Wigford Road/Church Road, which takes in the Norman chapel and the former farm buildings on the road frontage, still retains a semi-rural character, reinforced by the greenery and lack of pavement along the west side of the road.

Architectural Quality of Buildings and Building Materials/Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings

5.3.5 The barns and farmhouse which made up the original farmstead are important buildings not only within the conservation area but more widely within the Borough. This has quite rightly been reflected in their individual statutory listing. Unfortunately, the conversion of the farmstead to residential use in 1990 has disguised many of the buildings’ true architectural merit and historical importance.
5.3.6 The Grade II listed Cruck Barn is a 14th-/15th-century timber-framed barn. It is an important building in the conservation area not only due to its age but its size. The long barn is situated to the east of the former farm house and looks out onto the former farm’s courtyard. It has three 16ft bays with four trusses formed by pairs of crucks from ground to ridge with notches for the former cross-ties. Although converted to residential use in 1990, it still stands as one of the most important timber-framed buildings in the Borough.

The important cruck framed barn. The unfortunate focus of the car port is clearly seen.

5.3.7 As part of its conversion there have been several 20th-century additions and alterations including brick infill and a porch under a catslide roof in the former threshing-floor entrance. Window insertions have generally been kept small and unobtrusive. A large green oak car port with tiled roof to the northwest of the barn, although well constructed and of appropriate materials, is of disproportionately large size and has become an unfortunate focal point in views east along the Farm Mews driveway, taking the views away from the Cruck Barn itself and obscuring views of the exposed cruck truss in its left side.

5.3.8 The Grade II listed Church Farmhouse has been subdivided into Church Farm House and Hawthornes Cottage. The house is of 17th-century origin but has been much altered with many 20th-century additions, including windows and front and rear entrances. It retains its original central chimney stack and wide fireplace. The farmhouse, although partially obscured by its garden and a high laurel hedge in views from Church Road, is an important visual and historical marker from the rear within
the converted farm complex. Its brick front boundary wall is also of note on Church Road.

![Church Farmhouse & Hawthornes Cottage](image)

**Church Farmhouse & Hawthornes Cottage**

5.3.9 A 17th-century timber-framed barn is attached to the eastern elevation of Church Farm House. The building, now named ‘The Barns’, has also been converted into residential use. The barn has had many modern windows inserted; some on its southern elevation are rather standard modern casements which do not suit the building. The building is listed at Grade II.

![17th-century timber-framed barn](image)
5.3.10 ‘The Stables, ‘Cornerways’, ‘Barn View’, ‘The Retreat’, ‘Field House’ and various garages make up the rest of the Church Farm development. Apart from Field House and the garage blocks, these all appear to be conversions of old farm buildings, although their conversion has meant they are no longer easily recognisable as such. They are all of brick and have dark-stained timber window frames, some with dormer windows. ‘The Retreat’, on the east of the site, is a single-storey plus attic building with mock timber framing. A covered brick archway leads from the farm development out to ‘The Retreat’ and a path which leads to the High Street.

The Church Farm development: the conversions and alterations have significantly changed the character of the former farmstead

5.3.11 The conversion of these buildings has ensured that their appearance is now far removed from any idea of a working farm, with suburban-style landscaping within the former farmyards, particularly that to the east. However, it must be acknowledged that the conversion has had the benefit of retaining the buildings in use and has secured their ongoing maintenance.
Negative Features

5.3.12 While the conversion has entailed loss of historic character, the buildings remain generally attractive and form a cohesive group, differentiated from the surrounding housing on the High Street.

5.3.13 The use of good quality materials on the buildings has not extended to the gardens where concrete patio slabs make up the pathways and wooden trellises separate the spaces. The planting scheme with its heavy use of conifers does not fit in with the character of the conservation area. Ornate metal railings and gates next to ‘The Retreat’ and serving ‘Barn View’ are also inappropriate in terms of scale, materials and design.

5.3.14 The car port in front of the Cruck Barn is disproportionately large in its relationship with the important listed barn and obscures views of the exposed cruck frame in its left side elevation.

General Condition and Capacity for Change

5.3.11 The properties are in good condition and are well-maintained and, despite some unfortunate aspects to the conversion, this has secured the future use of the buildings. There is little capacity for any further change.
6.0 Proposed Boundary Amendments, Recommendations for Listing and Article 4 Directions

6.1 The Dosthill Conservation Area boundary may benefit from review and it is in fact questionable whether the designation continues to serve any justifiable purpose. While the central focus of the conservation area includes the church and chapel, Church Farm House and the Cruck Barn, all important listed buildings, the areas peripheral to these have relatively little 'conservation' value. These more peripheral areas include the modern St. Paul’s Court housing development and an area of unoccupied land adjoining the former quarry site.

6.2 There is little need to protect the church and chapel or the Church Farm complex through conservation area designation, as these buildings (which are the principal buildings of note in the conservation area) are already protected by their inclusion on the statutory list. The buildings in the eastern part of the Church Mews development are not statutorily listed in their own right, but lie within the curtilage of the listed farmhouse and barns and enjoy protection through this.

6.3 No additional buildings are recommended for inclusion on either the statutory or the local list.

6.4 We therefore propose four separate options for consultation purposes regarding a review of the existing conservation area boundaries, as follows:

1) **Make no changes to the boundaries and leave as existing, as shown on Plan 1.** The argument for this option is that the existing boundary still defines what remains of the historic core of the village despite the changes that have taken place, including the conversion of the former Church Farm complex. More restrictive ‘permitted development’ rights would also continue to apply (see paragraph 6.5).

   The argument against this option is that what is architecturally and historically most significant about the historic core of the village is already protected through statutory listing, and having a conservation area is not strictly necessary in order to protect these elements.
2) **Revise the boundaries as shown on Plan 2.** This would leave only those buildings considered significant in architectural and historic terms within the conservation area and would exclude the modern St. Paul's Court housing development. It would also exclude the unlisted buildings within the Church Farm Mews conversion. These would, however, remain protected because they are within the curtilage of the listed Church Farm buildings.

This option would also exclude the car park north of the churchyard from the designated area; however, any redevelopment of this piece of land would still be required to ‘preserve or enhance’ the character and appearance of the conservation area by virtue of directly adjoining it, if these revised boundaries are adopted.

The argument against this option is that virtually all the buildings that would remain in the conservation area are in any case protected through statutory listing and do not require the further protection of inclusion within a conservation area.

3) **Revise the boundaries as shown on Plan 3.** This is similar to Option 2 but would retain the whole of the Church Farm Mews conversion within the conservation area, better reflecting the historical boundary of the former farm complex.

4) **De-designate the conservation area.** The argument for this option is that those buildings in the conservation area which are significant are already protected by their statutory listing. As Policy ENV 24 of the Tamworth Local Plan states, ‘There will be a presumption in favour of preserving statutorily listed buildings and protecting their setting’. This means that new development should not be approved if it is considered that it harms the setting of a listed building.

6.5 Under Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, a general planning permission is granted for a range of minor developments. These ‘permitted development’ rights are more restricted in conservation areas for certain types of development, including the addition of dormer windows, some types of cladding, the erection of satellite dishes fronting a highway, and the reduction in size of permitted extensions.
6.6 Articles 4(1) and 4(2) of the Order enable local planning authorities to make certain directions withdrawing permitted development rights. Article 4(1) directions apply to any type of land or building but need to be approved by the First Secretary of State. Article 4(2) directions may be used to withdraw permitted development rights for a prescribed range of development which materially affects aspects of the external appearance of dwelling houses in conservation areas. The removal or alteration of a particular type of architectural feature important to the character and appearance of the conservation area, such as distinctive windows, gates and boundary walls, can be specified in the direction.

6.7 Local authorities should notify local people and take account of public views before deciding whether to confirm an Article 4(2) direction.

6.8 Article 4 directions applying to features like doors, windows, porches and roof coverings work best in areas of strongly-defined (and well-preserved) architectural character.

6.9 It is not considered appropriate to serve an Article 4 direction on any part of the Dosthill Conservation Area.
7.0 Monitoring and Revision

7.1 As recommended by English Heritage in its 2006 publication, *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, it is essential to monitor the conservation area and to review the published character appraisal on a regular basis.

7.2 Changes to the conservation area may occur through the implementation of schemes approved by the Council, such as new development or changes to the public realm, or through both permitted and unauthorised alterations. General deterioration or changes to the condition of the area’s physical fabric may also occur over time.

7.3 A dated photographic record of the conservation area has been created during the production of this character appraisal. The main aim of this is to provide a baseline for measuring change in the appearance of the conservation area and for monitoring the physical condition of its buildings. The record can also be used as an aid to any enforcement action should unauthorised alterations be carried out. In order to take enforcement action on unlisted buildings the unauthorised alteration must be shown to have been carried out within the last four years, so for these purposes it is important to ensure that the photographic record is updated on a regular five-year cycle.

7.4 In the case of listed buildings too, where there is no time limit on when enforcement action can be taken (provided of course that the unauthorised works were undertaken after listing took place), regular updating of the photographic record is equally important, not just as a record of change but as possible evidence in enforcement or prosecution cases.

7.5 If appropriate, local community awareness of the conservation area may be maintained by engaging their assistance in the updating of the photographic record. This might be achieved through the use of volunteers from local historical or amenity societies or even groups of schoolchildren or students working on a street-by-street basis. Information could be stored on electronic ‘pro formas’ which show dated ‘then and now’ photographs to illustrate where change has occurred. These could be added to every five years with each phase of review.
7.6 English Heritage (2006) recommends that a ‘virtuous circle’ of monitoring, review and action should be established in order to maintain a sustainable equilibrium. Ideally, a five-year cycle of review should be established. With the aid of an updated photographic record, a review of the conservation area in five years’ time (2012) to establish what has changed (and why) since this character appraisal was produced will enable it to be updated.

7.7 Importantly, such a review will also allow an assessment of the effectiveness of the Council’s current conservation area policy and a measurement of how successful the Council has been at implementing the recommendations for enhancement made in the character appraisal. The reasons for success or non-success can then be appraised and policies modified or specific actions proposed as appropriate. The rate and nature of change identified may also indicate whether it would be desirable to produce ‘Design Guides’ providing guidance on topics such as extensions and alterations to historic buildings, development proposals and shop front design.

7.8 The review may also lead to further alterations to the conservation area boundary, either to bring new areas into the conservation area or remove areas from it that no longer contribute to or reinforce its character and appearance.

7.9 The review may either result in a thorough overhaul and updating of the existing character appraisal and production of a new version, or could take the form of an addendum to the existing document, which focuses specifically on changes that have occurred over the last five years, what effect these changes have had on the character and appearance of the conservation area, and updated recommendations for enhancement.
Appendix 1:

Historic Ordnance Survey Mapping
Appendix 2:

Plan 1: Existing Designations

Plan 2: Proposals and Recommendations