

# STOCKBRIDGE

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



*“If we are to plan for  
the future of the village,  
we must fully understand  
its past  
& its present”*





## INTRODUCTION

### *What is the Stockbridge Village Design Statement?*

The Stockbridge Village Design Statement (VDS) has three purposes:

- to describe Stockbridge as it is today
- to set out guidance for the design of any future development in the village.
- to act as a guide to both the Parish Council and the Local Planning Authority when they consider planning applications for development or change of use in Stockbridge. The Borough local plan and the County Structure Plan, however, continue to be the definitive Development Plan for the purposes of development control.

This VDS draws attention to what is special about Stockbridge and to the features that give it a unique character. The aim is to give residents a say in the future of their village, to offer guidelines on conserving its particular qualities and addressing any current concerns, and to contribute towards the improvement of rural design in general. The VDS has been endorsed by the people of Stockbridge through a process of consultation including:

- A public meeting to explain what a VDS is and to get the support of the residents to create one for Stockbridge.
- Working parties, open to any resident that wished to contribute, to formulate different aspects of the VDS.
- A draft VDS presented at another public meeting for comment and also submitted to the Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) planning services for comment.

### *Why do we need a VDS?*

The need to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Stockbridge Village and its surrounds are recognised by its designation as a conservation area. The need for additional housing within Hampshire and Test Valley may result in continued pressure for new development in the area. It is essential that any future development is of high quality and that unsuitable development which may have been permitted in the past is avoided.

### *Who is the VDS for?*

The VDS is for everyone involved in the inevitable process of change as it may affect the village and its surroundings. It will be relevant to householders, planners, developers, builders and public bodies.

### *A quite unusual community*

Stockbridge lies on a main road with a steady stream of traffic, yet it has the friendly feel of a village. It has a population of less than 600 but supports some fifty shops, galleries, offices, pubs, hotels, restaurants, not to mention a primary school, a doctors' surgery and three places of worship. It has a wide and attractive High Street that stays in the minds of most travellers who pass through it. It is set in the lovely valley of one of England's best known chalk rivers and is surrounded by chalk downland. So it has become a popular site for day visitors, many browsing in its shops, some walking down to the open space of its Common Marsh, others setting out along one of the many paths in the country around the village.

Little is known about the early history of Stockbridge, indeed the name was not used for the settlement in the Domesday Book, when it was part of the Hundred of King's Somborne. But it is clear that the site of one of the more convenient places for a river crossing – where the valley is narrower and its slopes less severe – would have been used by men from earliest times, well before the Romans came. At some stage the crossing developed from a track based on bundles of withies to a causeway built of chalk, with a log bridge over the main river on the West side of the valley. This is the most likely origin for the name, since a 'stock' once meant a stump or log, as still used in the phrase 'stock still'.



*Right: Part of the Test Valley Tapestry, courtesy of Test Valley Borough Council*



## HISTORY OF STOCKBRIDGE

While it is certain that chalk was imported to create the causeway, we do not know when this happened. Nor is it clear whether it was done in one stage or whether an initial track was later widened to allow houses to be built. But whenever it was done, space was left between the houses so that a market could be held, giving the wide main street, which is the most striking feature of the village to this day.

It is this combination of a village community, a shopping centre and a focus of attraction for tourists – all set in lovely countryside – that needs to be held in balance in the years to come. Added to this is the fact that much of the village lies on a flood plain, so the need for great care and sensitivity in any future development is clear. Our Design Statement aims to set out the characteristics that make Stockbridge what it is and which should be kept in mind in future planning.

Stockbridge lies on the flood plain of the River Test. The Environment Agency has classed the flood plain of the River Test as a Fluvial Risk area, and a map showing the area around Stockbridge appears on its Web site. The flood risk at Stockbridge is currently assessed as being about one percent, sometimes referred to as one in a hundred years occurrence, i.e. low. The Government policy on this issue is contained within Planning Policy Guidance Note No (PPG25) published in July 2001 under the title “Development and Flood Risk”. The Environment Agency website address is [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk). Any proposals for new development must take this into account.



While the main river channel has probably changed little over time, many smaller channels have been dug for a variety of purposes: to drive mills, feed the canal, flood water meadows and, until the 1960s, to provide water and sometimes remove sewage. In all, seven streams pass under the High Street, adding to the interest and charm of the village.

In the nineteenth century a railway replaced the canal and for nearly a century (1865-1964) was a major feature of Stockbridge life, providing access to towns both North and South. When it finally closed in the 1960s, the present road system was created, using part of the track and station for a new section linking the two new roundabouts. The remainder of the track became the Test Way, both North and South of the village.

WHERE APPROPRIATE, PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OR CHANGE OF USE ON THE FLOOD PLAIN WILL BE REFERRED TO THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY BY TVBC, THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY.



Winton Hill





## THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE

The setting of Stockbridge in the valley of the River Test is enhanced by the hills that rise on each side. The surrounding fields, hedges and woods form a lovely background, whether seen from within the village or from the roads coming down the hills on the East or West. The village itself is full of trees; indeed photographs a century ago show fewer than today. The valley bottom is too marshy for arable crops, so the fields are used for pasture, grazed by sheep and cattle. The surrounding downs seen from the village are also mainly pastureland. Most of the cereal crops grown in the locality are on the uplands outside the valley.

Visual considerations apart, the land around the village has much environmental value. The River Test is famous world-wide for its trout fishing and the valley has been described as one of the most species-rich lowland river valleys in England. This has been recognized by the designation of the River Test as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Within the parish similar designations apply to the Common Marsh, Stockbridge Down and Stockbridge Fen (the area North of the recreation ground). In addition the whole Test Valley is an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA): as designated by DEFRA, this latter status offers less protection than that of SSSI, but indicates the importance attached to all our landscape.

The approaches to the village are along roads that are essentially rural in character. The A3057 Romsey to Andover road in particular, although an 'A' road, is narrow and twisty. On most of these roads the village is screened from view by trees and hedges. Only on the A30 does one see the village nestling in the valley, the church spire and rooftops mingling with countless trees.

There is a distinct demarcation between the village and surrounding open countryside. The village is not a sprawl, but a neat well-contained pocket of development contained within unspoilt rural approaches. This is a desirable feature in itself, and also helps to separate Stockbridge from other local communities such as Longstock, Leckford and King's Somborne; thus preserving the individual identities of each of them.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE OPEN SPACES AROUND STOCKBRIDGE ARE PRESERVED, AS SPACES BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS ARE VITAL IN RETAINING THE SPECIAL IDENTITY OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

THE SSSI's CONTRIBUTE TO THE SPECIAL IDENTITY OF STOCKBRIDGE AND SHOULD BE PRESERVED AND MAINTAINED

NEW CONSTRUCTION SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONTROLLED ALONG THE RURAL APPROACHES TO MAINTAIN THE FEELING OF IMMEDIATE TRANSITION FROM RURAL APPROACH TO VILLAGE CENTRE.





## OPEN SPACES WITHIN THE PARISH

Mention of the Common Marsh and Stockbridge Down raises the issue of the open spaces around the village. The Down which affords glorious views over rolling countryside about a kilometre to the East, and the Common Marsh, with its riverside walks just to the South of the community are very much a part of its history. Stockbridge is one of the few places in the country that still has Courts Baron and Leet. They were common lands to which the burgesses (Stockbridge citizens in the Middle Ages) had access for grazing and hunting, subject to the permission of the Lord of the Manor. In 1946 they were given to the National Trust by the then Lady of the Manor, Professor Rosalind Hill. Both areas are enjoyed throughout the year by local people and by visitors. The recreation ground to the North of the High Street is a further space available to all, while the Test Way, on the site of the previous railway, is much used by walkers, cyclists and riders. All these recreational areas are integral parts of the attractions of Stockbridge.



*Parade of Court Officials*



THE VILLAGE FACILITIES, AND THE TEST WAY, ARE USED AND APPRECIATED BY MANY MORE PEOPLE THAN THE RESIDENTS OF STOCKBRIDGE AND IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THEY ARE PRESERVED.





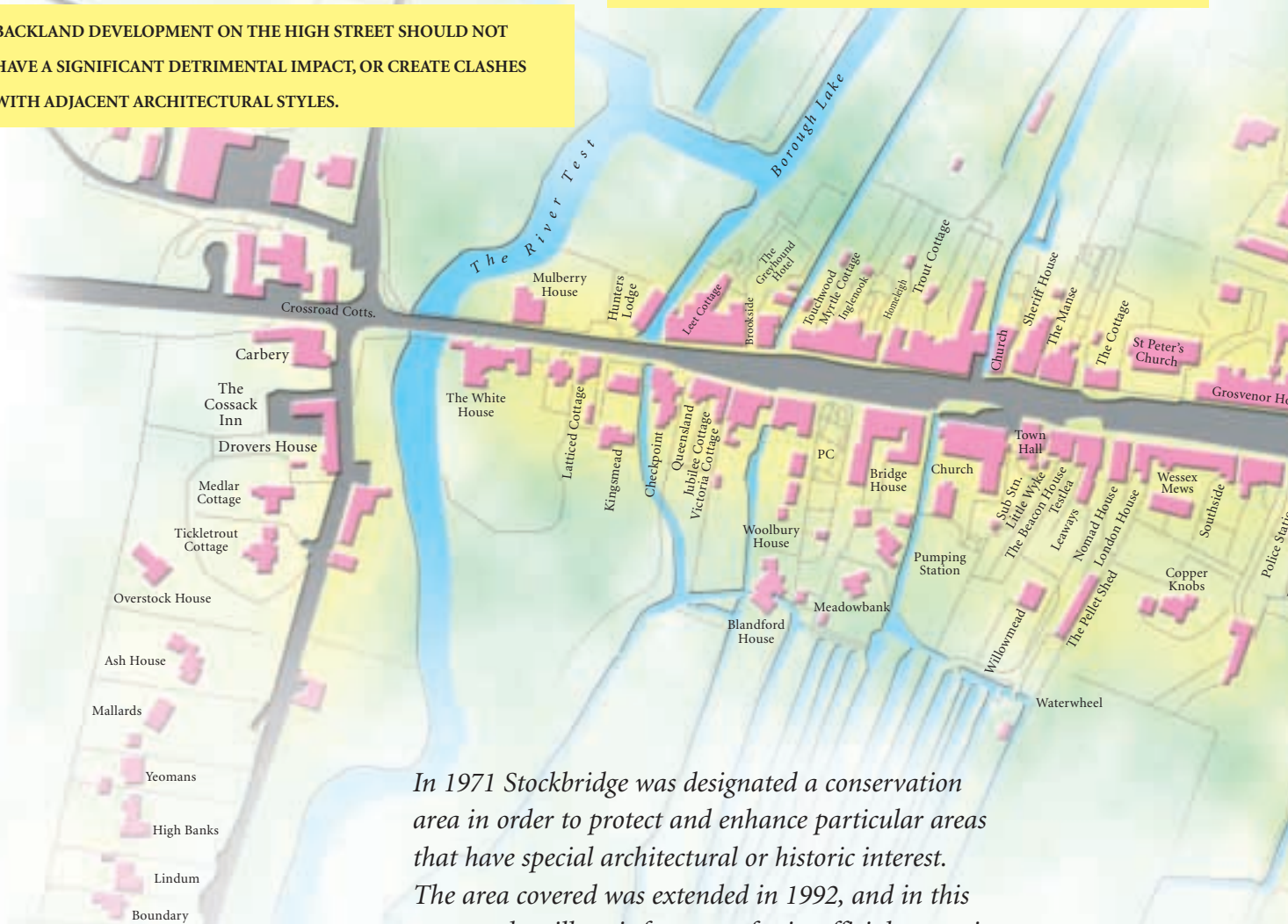
## THE VILLAGE ITSELF

The village has several distinct areas with different densities of building and with buildings from many different periods. The High Street is, in general, a high density development with little backland development. On the North side the plot layout is a rare example of a mediaeval strip boundary system (burgage plots) where the gardens are more or less the width of the houses. There are many related drainage streams. In the later developments on the South side – Nelson Close and Trafalgar Way – the housing is of medium density. The remaining developments along the Winchester Road, London Road, New Street, Old London Road and Somborne Hill vary between medium and low density.

Within the High Street the mixture of through traffic and cars stopping to call at one of the shops or other enterprises creates an almost ceaseless bustle. The shops can thrive because of the trade brought by the main road and the relatively easy parking. However many of the parked cars belong to those who work in one or another of the establishments – one count showed some 80 cars in this category. Thus there is a need for more off-street parking.

BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT ON THE HIGH STREET SHOULD NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT DETRIMENTAL IMPACT, OR CREATE CLASHES WITH ADJACENT ARCHITECTURAL STYLES.

ANY DEVELOPMENT SHOULD RESPECT THE DIFFERENT DENSITIES OF BUILDING WITHIN DIFFERENT AREAS OF STOCKBRIDGE.  
FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD MAINTAIN A VARIETY OF STYLES.

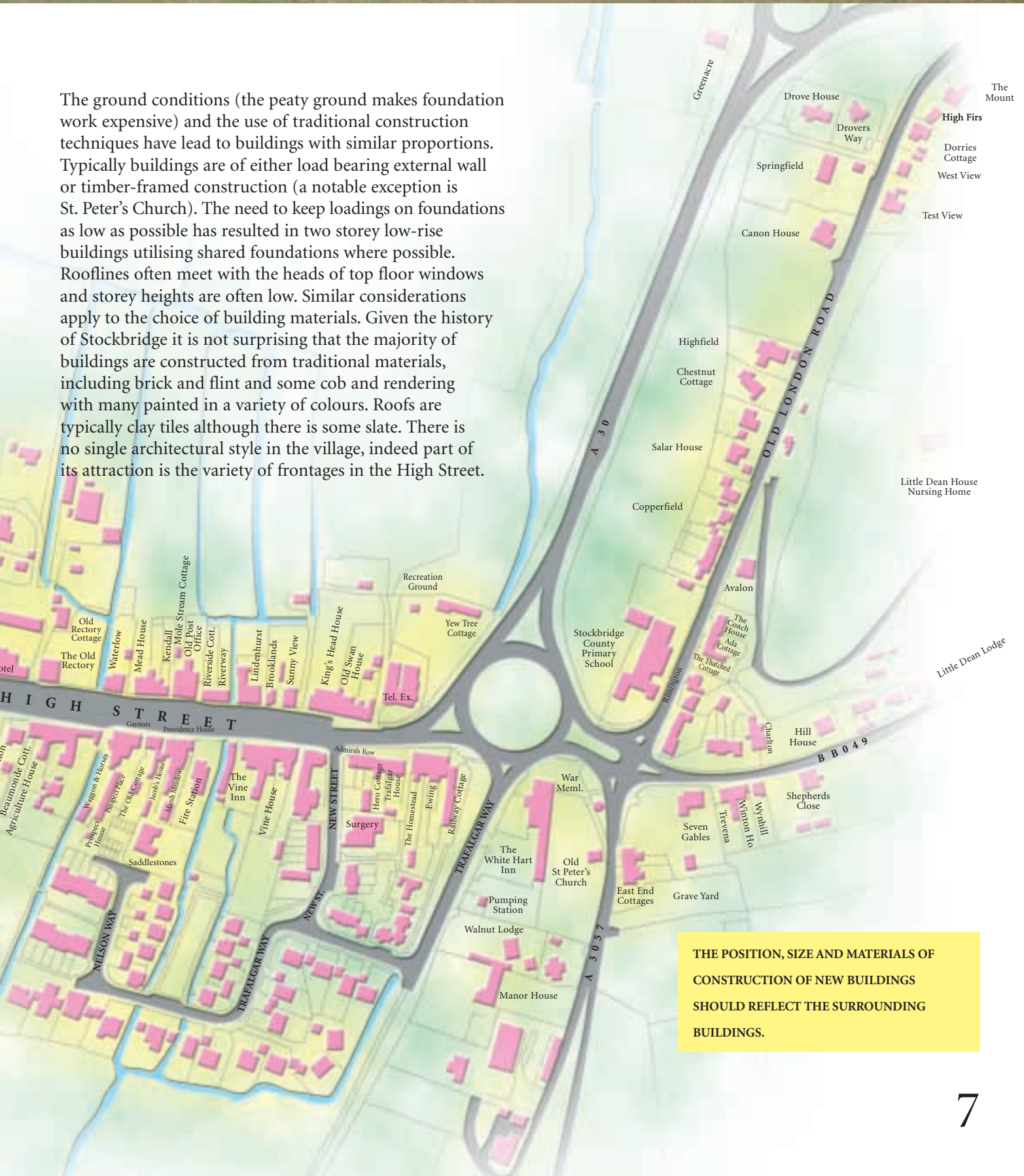


*In 1971 Stockbridge was designated a conservation area in order to protect and enhance particular areas that have special architectural or historic interest. The area covered was extended in 1992, and in this respect, the village is fortunate for its official protection. Development within conservation areas should preserve or enhance its character and appearance.*





The ground conditions (the peaty ground makes foundation work expensive) and the use of traditional construction techniques have lead to buildings with similar proportions. Typically buildings are of either load bearing external wall or timber-framed construction (a notable exception is St. Peter's Church). The need to keep loadings on foundations as low as possible has resulted in two storey low-rise buildings utilising shared foundations where possible. Rooflines often meet with the heads of top floor windows and storey heights are often low. Similar considerations apply to the choice of building materials. Given the history of Stockbridge it is not surprising that the majority of buildings are constructed from traditional materials, including brick and flint and some cob and rendering with many painted in a variety of colours. Roofs are typically clay tiles although there is some slate. There is no single architectural style in the village, indeed part of its attraction is the variety of frontages in the High Street.







Queen's Head



Stoke's Garage

## BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Given the history and environment of Stockbridge, it is not surprising that many of the buildings are listed, including some with interesting anecdotes linked to eras such as its horseracing past and the days of being a drove road and main highway to the West Country. *The first three mentioned are in fact in Longstock just over the Test Bridge*

They include:

**Drovers House** – with its Welsh inscriptions used by drovers driving flocks of sheep and cattle from Welsh hill farms, particularly in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

**The Cossack** – an inn from 1740 to 1966 named after a famous racehorse trained nearby.

**Hermit Lodge and The White House** – used by the Prince of Wales and Lily Langtry during their visits to Stockbridge Races and connected by a footbridge across the River Test.

**Stoke's Garage** – with its ornate first floor balcony.

**The Town Hall** – built in 1790 by M.P. Joseph Foster Barham during Stockbridge's 'Rotten Borough' era. It was modified and the clock installed in 1810

**The Grosvenor Hotel** – a characteristic presence in the High Street and home to the world famous Houghton Fishing Club.

**Kings Head House/Old Swan House** – originally The Swan Inn - a coaching inn.

**Trafalgar House** – this bow fronted building was originally the Stockbridge telephone exchange.

**The White Hart Inn** – typical of an early coaching inn, whose stables and large upstairs room have now been converted into comfortable accommodation.

**Old St. Peter's Church** – with its Elizabethan murals, is still in regular use. It is the chancel of the original church, dating back to the twelfth century and is the oldest building in Stockbridge.

**St. Peter's Church** – built in 1866 to replace Old St. Peter's which was considered unfit for worship.

The Town Hall



Kings Head House/Old Swan Inn



The Grosvenor Hotel



The White Hart



Old St Peter's Church



Trafalgar House



Waterlow



WATERLOW, TRAFALGAR HOUSE, HERO COTTAGE CAN ACT AS GUIDELINES, WHICH NEW CONSTRUCTION SHOULD REFLECT.





## BUILDING STYLE

The roofs and windows are of particular note. As the traveller descends into Stockbridge it is initially the higgledy-piggledy angles, sizes and heights of its roofs, contrasting with the straight road beneath, which give the village its character. Only in the occasional late twentieth century housing clusters is there uniformity. Elsewhere there is remarkable individuality of style. The same is true of windows. Except in the oldest houses, windows are usually generous in both number and proportion, with a slightly higher than traditional ratio of window to wall (perhaps because of the many shop frontages past and present). They vary in style and shape, from dormers to bay windows, but nearly all are divided into smaller panes in the traditional style. Some of the most recent shop frontages seem to be based purely on the design requirements of the chain they represent rather than the village and do not fit in well with the rest of the High Street. This is to be avoided in the future.



THE USE OF STEEL OR CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION FORMS, WHERE THE FRAMING IS EVIDENT OR VISIBLE, SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED. PREFABRICATED OR MODULAR CONSTRUCTION FORMS SHOULD NOT BE USED WHERE THIS WOULD CLASH WITH EXISTING ARCHITECTURAL STYLES.

Examples of groups of buildings above, on the front cover and on page 3, which enhance the image and distinction of Stockbridge, should be strictly conserved to protect the future identity of the village.





## BUILDING STYLE *continued*

Stockbridge has grown relatively little in the post-war years because of the limitations imposed on building on the soft ground in the valley bottom. Moreover there has been some loss of available accommodation due to three factors – the destruction of old insanitary cottages and replacement by fewer larger houses; the merging of two buildings into one; and the trend away from the use of accommodation over shops and other commercial buildings.

It is clear that new development needs to be sympathetic to all the aspects of the current buildings discussed above. However, we also want to avoid building a pastiche of traditional building styles.



NEW ROOF LIGHTS SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED IN TERMS OF POSITION, SIZE AND DETAIL. WHERE POSSIBLE, ROOF LIGHTS SHOULD BE AVOIDED IF THEIR POSITION CAN BE SEEN FROM THE FRONT OF THE BUILDING.





## GARDENS, TREES AND STREET ARCHITECTURE

These features also have an important part to play in determining the character of the village. Just as with building styles there should be a variety of styles but with an overall harmony. Walls, fences, hedges, front gardens and fields should be incorporated into development plans. Most of the trees in Stockbridge are mature, deciduous trees and developers should be prevented from substituting quick-growing conifers.

Many individual properties have their own unique features such as ornate window frames and bargeboards, scalloped roof or hanging tiles, decorated chimney stacks, garnetted stonework, date plaques and door frames with tiled steps and iron handrails.

Similarly careful consideration needs to be given to street lighting, the current lighting is below what is acceptable in some parts of the village and obtrusive and ugly in other parts. The recently installed flood lighting of St. Peter's Church is an example of a sympathetic twenty first century treatment to enhance a nineteenth century building. Its understated effect has proved an asset to the centre of the village, one much appreciated by the residents. However, some of the lighting is out of Character with the Village as many parishioners feel that the floodlights on the recreation ground are unsuited to their surroundings which are in a Conservation area. Glare can spoil the aesthetic appearance of rural settings and light pollution is an irritation to be avoided where possible. External light fittings on private buildings also need to be in character with the village.



HEDGES AND FRONT GARDENS SHOULD MOSTLY COMPRISE NATIVE DECIDUOUS SPECIES.

USE OF FRONT GARDENS FOR PARKING SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED UNLESS APPROPRIATE HARD STANDING IS PROVIDED.

ANY INCREASE IN STREET LIGHTING SHOULD RESPECT THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE AND PREFERABLY BE BASED ON THE EXISTING COLUMN TYPE & STYLE USED IN THE HIGH STREET.

APART FROM ENCOURAGING OWNERS TO RETAIN AND MAINTAIN EXISTING DETAIL WORK, ARCHITECTS SHOULD CONTINUE THE TRADITION OF INCORPORATING INTERESTING AND SYMPATHETIC DETAILS IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS.







## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- WHERE APPROPRIATE, PLANNING APPLICATIONS FOR **DEVELOPMENT OR CHANGE OF USE ON THE FLOOD PLAIN** WILL BE REFERRED TO THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY BY TVBC, THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY.
- **THE SSSIs** CONTRIBUTE TO THE SPECIAL IDENTITY OF STOCKBRIDGE AND SHOULD BE PRESERVED AND MAINTAINED.
- NEW CONSTRUCTION SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONTROLLED ALONG THE **RURAL APPROACHES** TO MAINTAIN THE FEELING OF IMMEDIATE TRANSITION FROM RURAL APPROACH TO VILLAGE CENTRE.
- IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE **OPEN SPACES** AROUND STOCKBRIDGE ARE PRESERVED, AS SPACES BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS ARE VITAL IN RETAINING THE SPECIAL IDENTITY OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES.
- **THE VILLAGE FACILITIES, AND THE TEST WAY** ARE USED AND APPRECIATED BY MANY MORE PEOPLE THAN THE RESIDENTS OF STOCKBRIDGE AND IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT THEY ARE PRESERVED.
- **BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT** ON THE HIGH STREET SHOULD NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT DETRIMENTAL IMPACT, OR CREATE CLASHES WITH ADJACENT ARCHITECTURAL STYLES.
- ANY DEVELOPMENT SHOULD RESPECT THE **DIFFERENT DENSITIES OF BUILDING** WITHIN DIFFERENT AREAS OF STOCKBRIDGE. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD MAINTAIN **A VARIETY OF STYLES**.
- THE **POSITION, SIZE AND MATERIALS** OF CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BUILDINGS SHOULD REFLECT THE SURROUNDING BUILDINGS.
- WATERLOW, TRAFALGAR HOUSE, HERO COTTAGE CAN ACT AS **GUIDELINES, WHICH NEW CONSTRUCTION SHOULD REFLECT**.
- THE USE OF **STEEL OR CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION FORMS**, WHERE THE FRAMING IS EVIDENT OR VISIBLE, SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED. PREFABRICATED OR MODULAR CONSTRUCTION FORMS SHOULD NOT BE USED WHERE THIS WOULD CLASH WITH EXISTING ARCHITECTURAL STYLES.
- **NEW ROOF LIGHTS** SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED IN TERMS OF POSITION, SIZE AND DETAIL. WHERE POSSIBLE, ROOF LIGHTS SHOULD BE AVOIDED IF THEIR POSITION CAN BE SEEN FROM THE FRONT OF THE BUILDING.
- **HEDGES AND FRONT GARDENS** SHOULD MOSTLY COMPRISE NATIVE DECIDUOUS SPECIES.
- USE OF FRONT GARDENS FOR **CAR PARKING** SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED UNLESS APPROPRIATE HARD STANDING IS PROVIDED.
- ANY INCREASE IN **STREET LIGHTING** SHOULD RESPECT THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE AND PREFERABLY BE BASED ON THE EXISTING COLUMN TYPE AND STYLE USED IN THE HIGH STREET.
- APART FROM ENCOURAGING OWNERS TO RETAIN AND MAINTAIN EXISTING **DETAIL WORK**, ARCHITECTS SHOULD CONTINUE THE TRADITION OF INCORPORATING **INTERESTING AND SYMPATHETIC DETAILS** IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS
- FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD REFLECT THE **NEED FOR A MIX** OF DWELLING TYPES AND SIZES.

[www.stockbridge.org.uk](http://www.stockbridge.org.uk)