

Willington

Cheshire

2018

Village Design Statement



Foreword

The parish of Willington is designated as an area of open countryside and therefore falls under the Cheshire West and Chester local plan – policy STRAT 9 which limits any development to that which requires a countryside location and cannot be accommodated within identified settlements.

STRAT 9

Green belt and countryside

Communities, through neighbourhood plans and village design statements will be encouraged to identify those features that contribute to their character. The intrinsic character and beauty of the Cheshire countryside will be protected by restricting development to that which requires a countryside location and cannot be accommodated within identified settlements. Within the countryside the following developments will be permitted.

- Development that has an operational need for a countryside location such as for agricultural or forestry operations.
- Replacement buildings.
- Small scale and low impact rural/farm diversity schemes, appropriate to the site, location and setting of the area.
- The reuse of existing rural buildings, particularly for economic purposes, where buildings are of permanent construction and can be reused without major construction.
- The expansion of existing buildings to facilitate the growth of established businesses proportionate to the nature of the site and its setting.

Development must be of an appropriate scale and design to not harm the character of the countryside.

The general extent of the North Cheshire Green Belt will be maintained. Policy 'STRAT 3 Chester' sets out the proposed release of Green Belt to meet the development needs of Chester. In settlements and areas of the countryside that are within the Green Belt, additional restrictions will apply to development in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Therefore this village design statement is mostly describing development in the terms of extensions or rebuilds to established housing stock/agricultural buildings.

Local Plan policy ENV 2 aims to protect and wherever possible enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness. The policy encourages development proposals to take full account of the characteristics of the site,

its relationship with its surroundings and views into, over and out of the site. It does on to say that development should be designed to retain and incorporate features of landscape quality.

This Village Design Statement has been produced by the local community and identifies the features which make up the special character of Willington. It should be taken into account in making decisions on planning applications to make sure that these important features are retained, respected and, where possible enhanced through new development.

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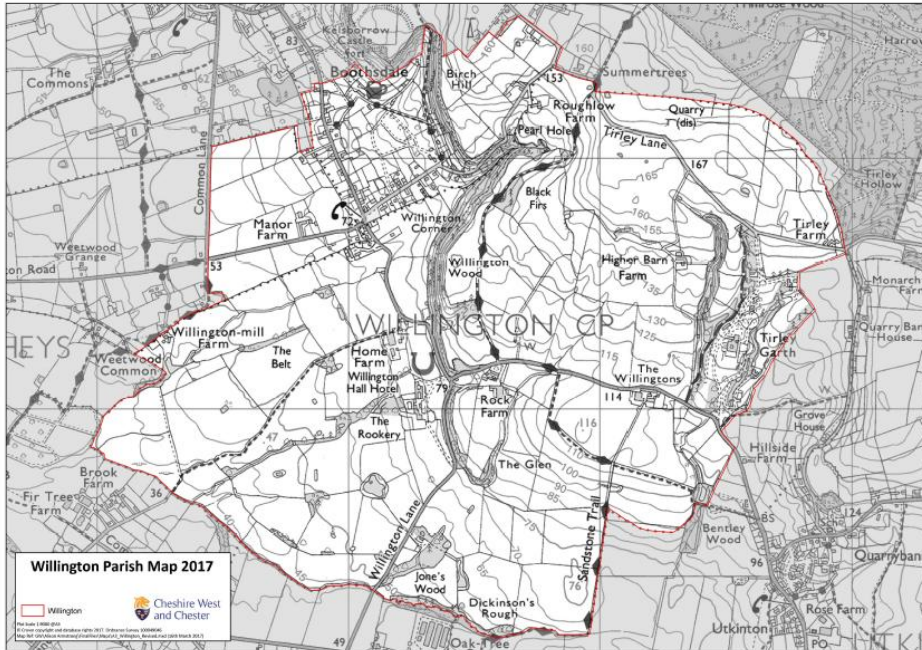
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Introduction



Willington is a small village and civil parish, about 9 miles (14 km) from Chester, in the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester and the ceremonial county of Cheshire, England.

It lies on the outskirts of Delamere forest and its character is embedded in agricultural activity. It is a haven for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

It is important to local people that with considerable development in the village over the last few years that the character of the village is maintained.

Willington has been designated in Cheshire West and Cheshire's Local Plan (part 2) as an Area of Special County Value. Any development should preserve and enhance the landscape character wherever possible and should also preserve local distinctiveness, sensitivities, qualities and values.

This village design statement is a document developed, researched, written and edited by local residents and supported by the Parish Council. The document describes the qualities and characters that local people value about the village and sets out clear and simple guidance for the design of all development within the village.

In writing this document full consideration was given to the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan. It is hoped that it will influence residents, architects and designers when making proposals for development and ensure that buildings/extensions respect and reflect local character.

The final document will be published on the Cheshire West and Chester website and will be a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications.

Consultation

Residents have been kept up to date on progress through the parish newsletter. A draft document was produced in May '18 and was available to residents on request or to view and comment on through the parish website. Copies were also available at the annual public meeting on May 22nd '18. The August '18 newsletter included the general recommendations from the VDS requesting residents to put any comments in the secure box provided on the village green.

Historical background

Neolithic axes have been found at Kelsborrow which suggests this was an important place for people before the construction of the Iron Age promontory fort (Kelsborrow castle). This site is on private property and lies just outside the modern parish boundary. The parish boundaries changed in 2015. Tourists have come to Willington since Victorian times and have walked the path leading to the fort. This area is known as 'Little Switzerland' for the far reaching views over the Cheshire plain.

The name Willington was derived from Wynflaeda the first recorded settler in the area. In the Domesday book it was recorded as Winfletone. In Norman times it was known as Wylaton part of the Forest de la Mara which translates as the forest of the lakes. Later during Norman times the land was given to the Abbot of Stanlow Abbey on the banks of the river Mersey. Due to flooding the Abbots moved to Whalley in the Ribble valley where the remains of the abbey can still be seen.

In 1593 the land came into the ownership of the Master Forester Sir John Done and remained in this family until 1828 when it was bought by Major William Tomkinson who transformed the woods and farms into a family estate. He built Willington Hall in 1829 designed by the architect George Latham in a neo-Elizabethan style. The hall is now a grade 2 listed building housing a hotel and restaurant. William Tomkinson also founded a school in cottages on the estate. This was rebuilt in 1890 and converted back to cottages in 1934 when the school closed. A reading room was built by James Tomkinson in 1897 to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, now a private residence.

On the edge of the Parish of Willington is a large property called Tirley Garth built between 1906 and 1912. The property was built in the Neo-Vernacular style with Elizabethan flavour. It has had various owners and uses over the years including being a base for 'Moral Re-Armament'.

There was a Methodist Chapel on Chapel Lane built in 1823. This has now been converted into a private residence.

The Memorial cottages on Chapel Lane were built in 1912 in memory of James Tomkinson who was killed in the House of Commons point to point race in 1910. These cottages were made available to deserving widows or elderly couples in Willington. The charity that looked after the cottages was taken over in 1996. They sold the cottages which were then converted into two houses and four affordable rental properties were built on part of the land.

In 1946 it is believed that a steam roller belonging to the County Council toppled over the side of Rough Low taking a section of road with it. Due to the war labour was very short and prisoners of war were recruited to build a wall and repair the damage. The wall is still there with an inscription noting the work of the prisoners.

The Boot Inn in Boothsdale was once part of a small holding. A beer house was established in 1868 and it has remained as a hostelry ever since although increasingly developed over the years.

The Boot Inn



The population of the village in 1971 was given as 132, almost the same as in 1881. Over the last 40 years the population has more than doubled. In the 2011 census the population was 277.

Although Willington has a long history its boundaries have not been clearly described until 2015 when it became a parish in its own right. Previously it was described as an 'extra parochial township' part of it falling into the parishes of Delamere and Tarvin but this did not include many of the outlying properties.

Landscape setting

The parish sits along the side of the Sandstone Ridge which acts as a backbone to Cheshire. Fifty per cent of the ridge is classified as undisturbed and has great historic and ecological value. The ridge stands prominently above the surrounding plain and is visually one of the most distinctive landmarks in the Cheshire landscape. There are 6 hillforts situated along the ridge and Willington sits below one of these known as Kelsborrow Castle. This hillfort exploits the natural defences of a wedge shaped spur of land framed by the steep slopes of the Sandstone ridge to the west and the deep combe of Boothsdale to the south east.

The hillfort itself sits just outside the parish boundary but the footpath that passes the hillfort also passes through Willington and affords locals and visitors magnificent views of the Mersey and Dee estuaries over the Cheshire plain, rimmed by the Peckforton hills and Clwydian range. Indeed one of the main features of the village is its elevated position in the landscape allowing for spectacular views from wherever in the village.



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Hedges are a mixture but outside the main settlement mainly ancient hawthorns which are protected wildlife habitats. The village is set in and surrounded by farmland. The most predominant being the apple orchards of Willington Fruit Farm.



The main backdrop to the village is the ancient woodland along the side of the ridge that dominates the main settlement of Willington

The following statement about Willington is taken from 'Local Landscape Designations: Areas of Special County Value in Cheshire West and Chester (June 2017) and describes why Willington has been cited as an Area of Special County value.

Willington Wood is dramatically located on the steeply undulating Eddisbury Sandstone Ridge between Willington and Utkinton, protruding abruptly above Helsby to Tarporley Sandstone Fringe and the surrounding flat expanse of the Cheshire Plain West. The fringe contains a higher proportion of mature hedgerow trees than the lowland plain. The fringe is a transitional landscape of importance to the setting of the prominent linear wooded ridge which is visible from long distances in the surrounding landscape. A landscape of strong contrasts where topography and vegetation provide small scale enclosure but elsewhere there are spectacular panoramic views across the flat plain to distant hills, including from the Sandstone Trail long distance route and from Tirley Garth Grade 11* Registered Park and Garden, the last remaining complete C20 Arts & Crafts Garden in Cheshire. Small brooks and streams and the wooded slopes on the distinctive, simple skyline, provide rich texture and character, and features of natural heritage interest. Tirley Garth and Willington Hall are listed buildings of special architectural and historic interest partly due to their landscape setting. Low density settlement pattern and absence of intrusive elements provide a tranquil landscape.

The area known as Little Switzerland (below), leading down from the hillfort, is a steep valley with ancient woods on one side.



Rough Low is also a steep valley having mature trees each side. At the bottom of the valley is a spring known as Pearl Hole which was the main water supply for the population in past years.



Willington Corner (above) is the approximate centre of the village and a small village green is located here with well established trees.

Willington Parish has 4 designated wild life sites within its boundaries (see appendix). Considering the small size of the whole parish these sites demonstrate the importance of wild life over the whole area.

Settlement Pattern

The majority of properties are within the area of Willington Corner, Chapel Lane and Willington Road. Thereafter properties are spread out in mainly detached or semi detached formation.

The village has no amenities except for the Boot Inn and Willington Hall hotel and no bus service. The post office, churches, school and community rooms have long gone and converted into houses.

Pavements are non-existent except for a single pavement on one side of Willington Road.

Building character

Architecturally there is no real theme to the property designs with a mish-mash of styles, traditional (as in over 150yrs old) to typical 50/60s era and of late current modern designs with flat roof features and large expanses of glass.

Buildings are made or faced by sandstone, brick, render or cladding with a mixture of roof types from clay, slate, concrete and flat being felt or similar, also with chimneys.

Most properties have off road parking albeit not for more than one car. Driveways are as important as a building facade and we have a mixture of tarmac, stone gravel, block paving, concrete, cobbles and York stone.

New developments have used reclaimed Cheshire common brick or bricks of a similar nature. They have slate or tiled roofs and have chimneys with traditionally shaped pots. Many of these new properties have timber and slate porches similar in design to the older properties. Sandstone walls have been retained or new ones built, and hedges have been retained or planted whenever possible.

Developments within the village are predominately brickwork construction and have traditionally incorporated the following features, which give Willington its defining character:

- Feature facing brickwork bonding and/or patterns other than simple stretcher construction.
- Use of local mellow Cheshire brick or local Ruabon hard-faced bricks.
- Victorian style feature clay or brickwork chimney pots.
- Natural slate roofs.
- Exposed projecting purlins to gable ends and exposed projecting rafters to eaves.
- Black rainwater goods.
- Hawthorn hedgerows and/or sandstone walls to frontages.

There are 4 Grade 11 listed properties within Willington these are:



Willington Hall



The Methodist chapel



Home Farm



Tirley Garth

Key village values

The preservation of:-

- Ancient woodland, and predominance of trees and hedgerows which ensures the village is nestled in the landscape of the Sandstone ridge.
- historical and ecological heritage
- the tranquillity of the village and surroundings
- the views afforded by the villages elevated position
- the local wildlife sites

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS

1. Existing field boundaries should be maintained and wherever possible traditional tree and high hedgerow boundaries enhanced. Tree protection orders must be preserved.
2. Any development should conform to the density, and building scale of the immediate area. Where new buildings or extensions or alterations to existing properties are proposed these should be sympathetic to the properties around them, to the density of the area and equally important to the plot size.
3. The views over the Cheshire plain and beyond should be protected to maintain the character of the village.
4. Recent funding from the EU has allowed for street lighting to be replaced with 'down lights' and any future development should protect the 'dark skies' with sympathetic lighting.
5. New three-storey development would be out of character and should be avoided.
6. Converted agricultural buildings should retain their general appearance and agricultural character when converted to other uses.
7. Original features of interest should be retained or enhanced, while additions should complement or match the character and features of the existing building, particularly in relation to materials and the design of windows and doors.
8. Roof materials, pitches of roofs, dormers, gable ends, porches and chimneys should blend, not jar, with the setting and character of existing neighbouring buildings. Care should be taken in the use of dormer windows generally and to the avoidance of flat or shallow pitches in particular.
9. Boundary treatments should be appropriate to the location and to existing building styles. A varied rural approach utilising local materials should be supported and high solid timber fencing should be avoided. Where this is not possible there should be sympathetic planting to distract the impact.
10. Adequate off-road parking facilities should be provided that are set back from the highway frontage, so that parked vehicles are less visually intrusive. Development that is likely to encourage on-road parking should be avoided.
11. Materials for private driveways, preferably permeable, should support the context of the rural environment. Loose gravel and laid natural stone work well for this purpose, unlike regular concrete paving and tar macadam, which are more appropriate in suburban and urban contexts.
12. Landscaping should harmonise with the rural village character; materials and planting procedures should be sympathetically chosen and mature plants used.
13. Public rights of way should be protected and signage, gateways etc. sympathetic to the rural environment (see example photos below).
14. The importance of Willington Parish as a valuable asset in the Cheshire countryside is undeniable. **The trees and hedgerows must be preserved and houses remain obscurely nestled into the hillside.**
15. Roof lines are most important. It is becoming popular at present to buy up older properties to knock down and construct more modern designs. The height of the existing property should be taken into account in the new design and should not be increased where possible.
16. Lighting should be taken into consideration so as not to pollute the surrounding areas night sky.
17. Consideration must now be made to permeable surfaces to allow water to drain through as against run off.
18. We need to protect view points and not build in spaces that afford views for both residents and walkers.



Inappropriate signage (metal pole and no place names).



Appropriate signage (wooden pole and clear destinations).

Appendix

Planning and policy context

National Policy Framework (Ministry of Housing, communities and local government 2018) – the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (para 170).

Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this (para 124).

Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics (para 125).

Vale Royal Borough local plan (policy retained after Jan 2015) – Conserve and enhance our natural and historic landscapes.

Cheshire West and Chester – Local Plan part 1 (2015)

Rural - STRAT 8 – Development should be appropriate in scale and design to conserve each settlements character and setting.

Landscape – ENV 2 – Development should take full account of the characteristics of the site, its relationships with its surroundings and where appropriate views into, over and out of the site.

Landscape – ENV 4 – Sites and features of biodiversity/geodiversity importance should be protected and development should not result in net loss of natural assets wherever possible provide net gains.

Landscape – ENV 5 – Designated and non-designated heritage assets and areas of acknowledged significance should be protected.

Landscape – ENV 6 – Development should respect local character and contribute to a sense of place through appropriate layout and design. It should be sympathetic to heritage, environment and landscape assets.

Cheshire West and Chester –Landscape strategy (2016)

Development should be sensitively located and detailed to make a positive contribution to the character of the area and that the landscape character and local distinctiveness is conserved, restored and enhanced.

Cheshire West and Chester – Local Plan part 2 (2018)

Protection of landscape – GBC 2 – Willington is designated as an Area of Special County Value

Design, character and visual amenity – policy DM 3 – development will be expected to achieve a high standard of design that respects character and protects the visual amenity of the local area.

Protecting and enhancing the natural environment – policy DM 44 – development will be supported where there is no net loss of natural assets and, wherever possible, it delivers net gains.

Comment [MR1]: National Planning Policy Framework has now been updated so this is no longer applicable. I have suggested additions from the updated document above

Trees, woodland and hedgerows – policy DM45 – development will be supported where it conserves, manages and wherever possible, enhances existing trees, woodlands, traditional orchards and hedgerows.

Listed buildings – policy DM 47 – development proposals will be required to safeguard or enhance listed buildings.

Non-designated heritage assets – policy DM 48- development proposals will be required to safeguard or enhance non-designated heritage assets.

Wildlife sites

Willington has 4 designated wildlife sites within its boundaries. These are:-

Willington wood – this site is mixed woodland located along a steep slope with several rocky outcrops. At the north-eastern end there is a stream running along the bottom of the slope. European Larch is a dominant species. The broadleaved elements of this woodland tend to occur towards the margins. Here silver birch is frequent and there are rare occurrences of sweet chestnut, sycamore and beech. The ground flora contains tor-grass, a locally rare species and lousewort. There is also climbing corydalis, harts tongue, bramble and woodruff. The latter is regarded as a Cheshire ancient woodland indicator species.

Jone's Wood – this site was identified as a site of Nature conservation value which were identified from aerial photography. It has been incorporated onto the Local Wildlife site list as it is thought to be a semi-rural woodland that would meet the Local Wildlife Site Criteria for Lowland deciduous mixed woodland.

Dickinsons Rough -the site is gently sloping wooded valley with a small stream meandering through it. The woodland canopy is dominated by large leaved lime with occasional pedunculate oak, horse chestnut and crack willow. The understory includes hazel, elder, holly, wild cherry and hawthorn. The ground flora is diverse with species such as yellow archangel, red currant, raspberry, enchanted nightshade, wood anemone, wood sorrel, opposite leaved saxifrage and wood dock. Of particular note is the occurrence of ramsons, a Cheshire ancient woodland indicator species.

Tirley Wood - This site is a mixed semi-natural woodland on the slopes of a stream valley. To the North the valley is very steep-sided but further south the gradients are moderate. The canopy is of frequent pedunculate oak and silver birch with occasional European larch and Scots pine. Of particular note is small leaved lime, a Cheshire ancient woodland indicator and locally scarce species. The understory contains rowan, holly, elder and rare hazel. The ground flora includes frequent bracken with occasional bramble, climbing corydalis and foxglove.