

**DRAFT**

**Maer Conservation  
Area Appraisal and  
Management Plan**

**June 2018**

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### Consultation Statement

This document has been written involving Maer and Aston Parish Council.

The Draft Appraisal and Management Proposals will be discussed with the wider community in a consultation for 6 weeks. Following this consultation the documents will be adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Documents to the Local Plan

If you have any queries about this document, would like further information please visit the Council website at

[www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/conservation](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/conservation)

Tel. 01782 742408 or email the Conservation Officer at [planningconservation@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:planningconservation@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)

## 1. Introduction

### Maer Conservation Area

This appraisal is part of a rolling programme of appraisals of Conservation Areas in Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough. The Borough Council has an obligation under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review, from time to time, its Conservation Area designations, & under Section 71 of this Act to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas.

The Maer Conservation Area was designated in 1970, nearly 50 years ago. The boundary at this time was chosen to encompass the village and the Maer Hall estate and parkland. It also includes Berth Hill on the north side of the A51 which includes an Iron Age hillfort, designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The village of Maer is located south of the A51 and includes Maer Hall and estate including Maer Pool, a former mere from which the village probably takes its name. The house and garden is designated as a Historic Park and Garden (Grade II), although the boundaries of the Park and Garden and Conservation Area do not match completely in that the former extends further to the west. See plan MA1 on page 6. The Historic Park and Garden was entered onto the Register in 19919, after the designation of the Conservation Area.

The omission of any particular feature in either the Character Appraisal or the Management Proposals does not imply that it is of no interest.

### Summary of key characteristics and issues

This Character Appraisal concludes that the key positive characteristics of the Maer Conservation Area are:

- An historic village in a rural setting and an informal organic layout, nucleated around the Hall, its outbuildings and the Church.
- Topography which creates a secluded undulating pastoral landscape punctuated by sandstone ridges and woodlands.
- An estate village formed and influenced by various key owners of the adjacent country house mansion in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

- A village with a range of modest architectural features creating a village vernacular.
- A landscape where the stone boundary walls, hedges, woodlands and specimen trees make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

The Character Appraisal concludes that the key issues in Maer village are:

- Retaining the landscape character of the village and high density of mature trees, woodlands and hedgerows.
- Ensuring the right balance is struck between the nature and heritage conservation for the mere and parkland features.
- Maintaining the historic sandstone walls along the roads within the village
- Protecting architectural features on buildings and preventing incremental residential alterations to houses.
- Modern farm vehicles through the village.

### Conservation Area boundary

- The key historic areas of the village are recognised within the current boundary but it is considered that there is merit in considering a change to the Conservation Area boundary to incorporate additional area of landscape to the southwest which forms part of the designed view from the hall. Consideration will also be given to extending the boundary to match the Park and Garden boundary since it currently heads southwards across the parkland arbitrarily cuts through the old trackway and through the middle of the woodland. The adjacent farm and estate buildings to the south and Primrose Cottage to the east are also considered and discussed in further detail within the management proposals.

### Planning Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out recognises that a core role of the planning system is to conserve heritage so it can be enjoyed by future generation and sets out the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of heritage. Conservation Areas are termed designated

heritage assets in the Framework. Consequently their importance is elevated by this designation.

Section 12 of the NPPF sets out the main policies in respect to the historic environment. The key messages are:

- Local planning authorities should set out in the Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment
- The value of the historic environment in creating sustainable and viable communities, including the benefits to the local economy
- When considering the designation of Conservation Areas, the area's special architectural or historic interest should justify designation, otherwise the concept is de-valued
- When considering the impact of proposals on a designated heritage asset great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Substantial harm should be exceptional, whilst less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development
- In Conservation Areas and within their setting, there are opportunities for new development to enhance or better reveal their significance (such as by replacing inappropriate development or enhancing key spaces and views)
- Not all parts of the Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. However, loss of a building or structure that contributes to the significance of the Conservation Area will amount to substantial or less than substantial harm, taking into account the impact upon significance of the Conservation Area as a whole.

Section 11 sets out the means to conserve and enhance the natural environment, protecting designated sites. Maer Village is within the open countryside as indicated on the current Local Development Framework Proposals Map so appropriate policies also apply.

These policy documents will provide a firm basis on which applications for development within the Maer Conservation Area can be assessed.

## **Local Policy Framework**

This Character Appraisal, with its associated Management Proposals, should be read in conjunction with the wider policy framework as set out in various policy documents, particularly the NPPF. The Development Plan for the Borough currently consists of the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy and saved Local Plan Policies and the emerging Joint Local Plan with Stoke on Trent City Council. More information about the planning system can be found on the Borough Council's website: [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/planning)

### Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents

#### Design Guide

The Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) focuses on principles of creating better places and emphasises the importance of how a development should relate to its context. It is a practical tool and can be viewed on the Council's website [Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Urban Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/urban-design-guidance-supplementary-planning-document) (2010)

#### Register of Locally Important Buildings

The Council produced a Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures which describes the process by which buildings are added to the list and the criteria which is applied. Information about the Register and the current list is available to view online at [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/localregister](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/localregister). The list is generally updated every two years.



## **2. Location, setting and activities**

Maer is a village in north Staffordshire, approximately 6 miles south west of Newcastle-under-Lyme. The Conservation Area is separated by the former turnpike Stone/Nantwich A51 Road, with Berth Hill on the north side of the road and the village, Hall and parkland on the south side.

Maer village is relatively remote and has a secluded character as one enters the village south along the road, bounded by tall hedges and woodland which rises up on the left. The parkland setting abuts the main road and extends to the west of the Conservation Area boundary and beyond. The lodge marks the edge of the great hall along the curving private drive. The public road runs south to the village in between the hall and the church and the rest of the village is below the former Vicarage. The village church is located high above the narrow road which has a high stone boundary wall holding back the embankment. To the right are stone walls marking the estate of Maer Hall.

Maer Hall is located in the centre of the village and stands at the south-east corner of an extensive park. The parkland setting marks the character from formal gardens with lawns and designed landscape and large pool surrounded by planted woodland which becomes less formal and more agricultural. The fields and parkland contribute to create a rural setting.

The houses were former farmhouses, labourer's and estate workers cottages and have modest gardens and fields are located to the rear of the gardens.

There is a village hall, some converted estate buildings used as holiday lets. The cricket ground and pavilion building are still shown on the maps but no longer in use. All other amenities have since closed and Maer is now a residential village with no amenities.

### **Topography and Geology**

Maer village, including the pool and parkland is located at the eastern end of a flat bottomed valley characterised by undulating low hills and mounds and extensive areas of woodland covered by large irregular-shaped fields divided by hedges. The land slopes steeply up to the western ridge and then rises up to the

east and a large area of woodland culminates at the edge of the churchyard of St Peters Church.

The small sandstone ridges cut across the plain and are very prominent. Maer and Hanchurch are significant and are characterised by steep sides and woodlands which are frequently ancient. The plains are remnants of the glaciers and hence the landscape is punctuated by many ponds and meres. This has produced very fertile clay soils. The clusters of meres and mosses are ecologically significant and nationally important in the case of Maer pool, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Within the parkland the Maer Pool stands in the centre as the main feature. This is the start of the River Tern and was one of the glacial meres. This is shown on William Yates's Map of Staffordshire (taken from Andrew Dobraszczyc's social history walks around the village, 2007). The main road that now runs into the village was diverted from between the lake and hall by Josiah Wedgewood II in 1807. He also carried out other 'improvements' such as draining land. More detail can be found in the Historic Development section of this Appraisal on page 8.

### **Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings**

The areas outside the Conservation Area boundary significantly contribute to the rural village scene, namely the extensive parkland landscape beyond the boundary; and the rolling lowland landscape which surrounds the village. More estate cottages and a farm are located south of the village along Maer Lane and another former farm to the west and outside the Conservation Area, which also used to form part of the estate.

### 3. Historic development and archaeology

#### Archaeology

There is an iron-age hill fort at Berth Hill, formerly called Byrth Hill, 600m north of Maer Hall. Often these hillforts were linked by ancient trackways along the ridges. The site covers approximately 9 acres with some natural springs which used to supply the village with water via a terraced aqueduct built by the Wedgewood family, but this is no longer the case. Many villagers allude to this in their accounts in the book which was compiled in 2012 (The Life and Times of the Villages Maer, Chorlton and Blackbrook). The site is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and has no public access.

The SAM description reveals that the fort is a good example of a fortified enclosure with defensive ramparts. It describes how the hillfort is a terracing and steepening of a natural hill and importantly that it includes the remains of an 19<sup>th</sup> Century ornamental landscaped garden which is a key part of the history of the site. Certainly this aspect deserves further research.

#### Historic Development

Ancient history of this area is evident in the hillforts around the area. The village of Maer, variously spelt Mere, Meave and Maer in the early records, takes its name from the lake or mere that lies in the grounds of the Hall to the west of the present village. It is probable that a Saxon settlement existed where Maer village is now. There are records relating to times shortly before the Norman Conquest and details of changes of ownership of the manor of Maer. Maer's existence is recorded in the Domesday Book.

Places of settlement would have been created on tracts of higher land where forests gave way to a more sparsely covered area or open heathland. It is known that an iron-age fort preceded the village settlement on land known as Byrth Hill (see above)

At the base of Berth Hill, on the A51, opposite the junction of the road leading to Maer Village can be seen the War Memorial. This was erected by public subscription and is of interest as it displays only two figures, representing the Army and the Navy.

One of the oldest buildings in the village is St Peter's Church, the deeds of which date back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It is believed that the original church was built on the same site in about 1200 A.D. The present church seems to have been erected in about 1610, one of the first to have been built after The Reformation. The church was heavily restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The former vicarage to the church is now a private house. The original two-storey sandstone building was constructed in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century and was considerably altered in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century using red brick.

The owners of the hall have historically shaped the parkland and the village. The present appearance of Maer Estate and village owes much to events after 1800, when Josiah Wedgewood purchased Maer Hall in 1802 and proceeded to enclose large areas of its land to the North of the village. An area that appears on Yates' map of Staffordshire in 1775 identified as Maer Heath. In 1807 a plan was submitted to Staffordshire Quarter Sessions proposing an alteration to the road from the turnpike from Lichfield to Nantwich to the village of Maer. The Ordinance Survey Map of 1883 shows the new road system in place separating the village from the mere, including it in the parkland and allowing the estate to become more private.

Josiah Wedgewood II owned the whole of the north side of the village. This position is still the same today as the current owner also owns the estate, its buildings north of the village, much of the parkland up to and across to the west including also Berth Hill. Wedgewood's daughter was the mother of Charles Darwin and Darwin married his cousin Emma Wedgewood in 1839. Darwin is said to have been a frequent visitor at Maer Hall.

Wedgewood built stone walls and extended the pool to run in front of the house. This is now set further back so that the boat house is no longer on the edge of the pool. The 1880 map shows another boathouse on the opposite edge of the lake. Following the death of Wedgewood II the house was sold and the particulars set out what was part of the estate at this time. The walled garden in the village was in place at this time. (extract and map, Dobraszczyk 2007)

The present appearance of the Village and of the Hall is owed primarily to the fact that



between 1802 and 1963 the major land owners and local employer was one of three families:

- 1802-1847 Josiah Wedgwood II
- 1847-1892 William Davenport
- 1892-1963 Frederick James Harrison and his family.

The Davenports added wings to the hall (Culshaw) built a sandstone bridge carrying a footpath over the road from Maer Hall to the church. They also extended the stable yard buildings and a new estate yard (now Maer holiday cottages) and he bought most of the land in Maer Parish. It is fair to say the appearance of the village estate and park were substantially altered and added to during this time.

Harrison, a Liverpool ship owner, spent vast sums of money on the Hall making it into a 'grand spacious mansion'. The Hall provided a great deal, if not all employment in the village. The Harrison families, as the Davenports before them, were enthusiastic members of The Hunt and played a prominent part in the social life of Staffordshire. In the sale particulars of the Maer Estate in 1846 the parkland is described as picturesque commanding romantic views and scenery, and to the visitor today this statement remains the as valid as it did then.

Most of the properties in the village were rebuilt in the 19th Century by the Harrison family, meaning that there are very few properties that relate to earlier times. This included, the Laundry, the former school, former school, now village hall and cottages. Only the Hall itself, the church and the vicarage can reveal any link with earlier centuries.

Since the Harrison family owned most of the properties in the village they were able to prevent any development that did not suit them, e.g. there is, and has never been, a Public House in the Village. This means that the village has altered little since the beginning of the century. The Harrison family had a new school built at Blackbrook in 1897 to 'keep the noise of the children out of the village'. He also replaced Holme Farm with the current building, now called Bates Farm in 1900 and Weston Meres Farm on the edge of the village in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Hall was sold by the Harrison Estate in the early 1960's and since that time the houses in the village have steadily become privately owned. Until the 1970's there was a Village Shop, a Post Office and a Wheelwright business. Of the current properties in the Village only a very small number have been built in the last 25 years.

The new properties are relatively discreet some set behind historic walls, built from red brick so that they blend into the character of the vernacular.

Dr J M Tellwright purchased the Hall in 1963 and removed the Victorian extensions that had been added to the Hall by the Harrisons and it is now largely back to its original 17<sup>th</sup> Century size.

Reference is made in the village publication about the air raid shelter in the grounds of the hall which deserves a mention here as part of the village history. There was a separate entrance for the villagers and one for the owners of the hall.

#### **4. Spatial and Character analysis**

An analysis in plan form is given on the Townscape Appraisal Map.

##### **Layout and street pattern**

The Conservation Area is formed around the extensive grounds of Maer Hall and the small village including the road junctions of Haddon Lane and unnamed roads running southwest from the village centre. Entering the Conservation Area from the main A51 Stone/Nantwich Road opposite the War Memorial which stands at the base of Berth Hill one travels through a sunken road and passes under the bridge past the church set on a hill with the wooded slope as its backdrop.

The gentle curve of the road around the village past the gatehouse to the Hall and the topography of the village with the high walls give a feeling of enclosure and seclusion.

Haddon Lane travels westwards into the centre of the village opposite the Maer Hall holiday cottages up towards Chapel Chorlton. Further south a lane heads northwest upwards towards Bates Farm (outside the Conservation Area). Both are narrow lanes with no pavement and steeply incline out of the valley.

The road through the village has a narrow pavement on one side and continues to Weston Mere Farm (outside the Conservation Area) and to Standon beyond the Borough boundary.

The dwellings within the Conservation Area include a range of building forms. They include semi-detached estate houses, a few large detached houses in larger plots, converted farm buildings. The overall pattern of growth of most of the historic village was heavily influenced in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when Harrison was the owner.

The plot sizes, shapes and length of frontages in the village centre vary although most houses are close to the road with small front gardens set behind the stone walls and some are closer to the road with a more informal planting to the front boundary.

The layout of the Conservation Area is within the valley and essentially is ribbon development along the road through the village and around the road junctions, close to the church and the hall. A number of public

footpaths and rights of way are located within and outside the Conservation Area boundary extending northwards after the bridge to the A51, one that travels south past Leas Yard and another which goes north from Haddon Lane.

##### **Approaches to the village**

The approach to the village from the north along the Stone/Nantwich Road is through open countryside with boundaries to the fields beyond the road formed by sandstone walls topped by hedges. Entering the village from the south, past Weston Meres Farm and cottages, there are hedges on both sides of the lane. Walls are retained behind the overgrown vegetation but at this end the walls are not visible.

##### **Open spaces, trees and landscape**

Maer is a rural Conservation Area with no public open space as such but the private and semi-private open spaces are crucial to creating the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting.

The fields around the village are crucial to creating the agricultural setting for the village and some views into and out of it. Similarly the open parkland around the Hall provides a stunning landscape. There are many historic woodlands, some planted by Josiah Wedgwood II during his improvements to improve the setting and provide privacy to the hall. Much of the Conservation Area is unbuilt environment albeit the parkland is managed differently from the agricultural land.

The church yard set on steep ground, around the Church of St Peter is substantially enclosed by woodland to north and east. The grass bank and shrubbery and hedge on the ramped approach to the church form an important visual component of the Conservation Area. Access from the ramp to the former Vicarage is via path into the walled brick garden which is well screened from public view by the trees and planting.

##### **Trees and Hedges**

Trees hedges and vegetation play an important role in Maer Village Conservation Area in defining boundaries, screening and shaping views. It has been historically described as handsome parklike pastures and the hills around creating an Amphitheatre

around the Hall. This is the same today with a predominantly agricultural, parkland and garden environment.

The main areas of woodland and plantations were planted by Josiah Wedgwood II to Webbs' design and said to be principally of larch and oak. Webb was working to the principles of garden design in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and at Maer he worked on enhancing and manipulating the natural landscape using the mere, trees, topography to create vistas. The further owners of the estate all clearly added to the areas of woodland and their management according to their style and the fashions of the day.

There are extensive areas of woodland planted as part of estate improvements and are named on the maps as Knights Wood, by the lodge, Bath Wood and Pool End Wood and Hogshead Wood surrounding the pool. Nursery Wood is on the western edge and The Ridding to the south western corner the latter of which is designated as ancient woodland, although not all of this woodland is currently within the Conservation Area boundary it is within the Park and Garden boundary. The Thickets is dense woodland on a hill to the rear and north of the church creates a large band of trees and screens the village when viewed from the north. Berth Hill is also heavily wooded although said to be overrun with Bracken. The latter also contains pleasure grounds and wooded walks laid out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ashes Drumble frames the view from the Hall to the southwest.

The areas of woodland are all protected by either an area Tree Preservation Order or as single specimen trees. The single trees are within the parkland, down the main road into the village and on the boundary between 2 and 3 Maer Village. The hilly knolls on the eastern edges of the boundary, one in the north and one towards the south are also protected.

Hedges often top the walls of properties within the village, for example at Home Farm and towards the southern edge of the Conservation Area boundary hedge has completely covered the walls, but members of the village confirm the walls are still present.

A key landscape feature which appears on the 1900 OS map shows the ornamental gardens north of the church from the bridge over the road in a series of criss-cross pattern of woodland walks. This is not evident on the ground anymore.

#### Other frontage boundaries

Through the whole of the village from the Lodge and war memorial, the lane is characterised by stone boundary walls. As one approaches the Hall and Church these walls very high and imposing marking the edges of the road and demarking the boundaries of the properties and against the church holding back the hillside. South through the village, the walls continue some regular coursed and some irregular but they are one of the most significantly unifying features of the Conservation Area and village.

Very few unsuitable new front boundaries have been erected in the Conservation Area, only one pair of estate cottages has altered the appearance of the wall by adding a decorative suburban feature wall.

#### Gate piers

In line with the prevailing understated rural character of the Conservation Area, few of the properties within it have dramatic gates or gate piers at the entrances to the properties. There are some piers at Croft House adjacent to the Maer Estate Cottages; some at the Parish Hall and closer to the Hall are a series of piers announcing entrances to the hall outbuildings.

#### **Focal points, focal buildings, views and vistas**

Views tend to be restricted due to the topography, trees and vegetation, and orientation of the built form creating an enclosed feeling and character within the village. There is a strong contrast in landscape character between the ridges and surrounding plain which provides for expansive views, notably across the landscape to Berth Hill and Maer Hills from the southwest

There are panoramic views of the Hall and its outbuildings and the backdrop of the countryside from the churchyard. There are many striking views also from within the parkland landscape not least the vista from the Hall up to the SW ridge which is framed by the garden balustrade and groups of trees.

There is an impressive view of the village and from the roadway south to the ridge which marks the SW CA boundary. Another key view is across the fields behind the Old Laundry to the grassy knolls with clumps of trees. The knoll in the top northwestern corner

below Maerfield Gate Farm is a distinctive landscape feature.

The most obvious focal point of the village is the Church which stands on the edge of an embankment but due to the topography of the village and the curve of the road it is not seen until nearly upon it. Equally the gatehouse and its flanking walls is a dramatic structure within the centre of the village but not seen until one ventures towards it.

The former garden wall is another important feature within the centre of the Conservation Area both as an attractive large structure and as part of the history of the estate.

The War Memorial, on the main road at the bottom of Berth Hill is a key focal point for the entrance to the village and what it represents.

## 5. The Buildings of the Conservation Area

### Listed Buildings

The buildings within Maer Conservation Area which are of the highest architectural or historic interest are on the statutory list of buildings of architectural or historic interest. They are all listed at Grade II except the Church of St Peter and Maer Hall gatehouse and walls which are Grade II\*. They are:

Church of St Peter. The Parish church is on a medieval site and has some 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century fabric with 14<sup>th</sup> Century additions. It was rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and restored in 1870. The tower is thought to be early 17<sup>th</sup> Century (Pevsner). Built from coursed and ashlar sandstone with decorative fish scale tile roof.

Memorials and features in the Churchyard. There is a early 19<sup>th</sup> century stone sundial and 3 chest tombs all listed Grade II. The mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century tomb, dedicated to the Harding family has collapsed due to a tree which appears to have grown through one end of the tomb.

Maer Hall (Grade II) has mid 17<sup>th</sup> Century origins but is much altered. It was extensively extended in mid – late 19<sup>th</sup> Century by Culshaw and later by Francis Doyle for Harrison but then reduced to remove the Victorian additions to its original size in the 1960s by the next owner Mr Tellwright.

Gatehouse, flanking walls and bollards (Listed Grade II\*) constructed from sandstone in late 18<sup>th</sup> Century with a stone slate roof this impressive clockhouse was built by Wedgewood II as an entrance to the yard. This has some structural problems and is on Historic England Buildings at Risk Register but has currently been temporarily stabilised.

Lodge, Gate Piers and gates (Grade II) dated 1860 built from sandstone with stone slate roofs in Jacobean style and stone gate piers with cast iron gates.

Stable block at Maer Hall, built by Wedgewood II but extended by Davenport family. Grade II Listed Building it includes a coachmans house and is now partly residential and partly garages for the current owner. The original stables are still intact.

Outbuildings in outer stable yard SE of the Hall, series of outbuildings including stables/coach house, dovecote and other

building. These brick and tile buildings were probably built by mostly by Davenport as he expanded and improved the estate towards the village.

Boathouse and attached causeway (Grade II) built for Thomas Harrison in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century formerly on the edge of the lake when it came further up to the house. The causeway links from the stone balustrade and runs for about 20 metres.

Stone balustrade (Grade II) built from ashlar sandstone this low open balustrade is approximately 200 metres in length interrupted by 5 short flights of steps into the lower garden. This was added in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the formal gardens were laid out for Harrison.

Park Bridge, steps and revetment walls (Grade II) built by Harrison in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century the bridge carries the footpath over the road. One side leads down steps with low copings and piers down to the grounds of the hall and the other leads to the church through former gardens. There are high revetment walls to the north and south with a steep approach to the church from the road opposite the hall.

The (Old) Vicarage (Grade II) The former vicarage is partly late 16<sup>th</sup> Century but altered and extended in mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Large chamfered plinth of sandstone and purple-brown brick to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century part and red brick to later section.

### Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest

There are many buildings of interest which were all part of the estate within the village. All of the houses are mentioned in the local book produced for the village and it is not the intention to repeat that information for the review, but a few buildings require mention.

The now village hall was built as school but this became the Institute when Harrison arranged for a school to be built outside the village on the main road (now the Barbour outlet store)

Kitchen Garden wall, part of the former estate, now houses a modern property, but lies within the centre of the village and has aesthetic and historical significance to the village.

The Old Laundry, built by Harrison after 1893, is set back off the road and brought by cart from the hall.

Agricultural workers dwellings were also built and form the pairs of semidetached estate dwellings which are south of the hall. All built from red brick (some painted) with clay tiled roofs (fishscale) simple half gable dormers with barge boards and small ground floor bay windows with tile roofs. Windows in the village tend to follow the pattern of 2 light casement windows, all replaced. To the south are later pairs of estate semis of similar design with simple open porches or door canopies.

The Old Post Office and Bothy House, located in the centre of the village form a group around the road junction close the former garden house. Built from red brick with two storey and one and a half storeys the properties are set back from the road close to the road edge with small informal front gardens.

Home Farm (now residence) located south of the hall was built by Josiah Wedgewood II in spacious grounds set back from the road. Built from brick (painted) with a hipped roof, symmetrical with grand central entrance with full height pillars and unusually shaped casement windows.

Ice houses in Hogshead Wood – supposedly 2 ruinous ones and one underground chamber, although only one ruinous one was visible during the review.

Maer Mews, are the converted farm buildings which originally belonged to Home Farm. They were converted in 1993 into 3 dwellings and a bungalow.

Stone Cottage originally had outbuildings and New House is now located on the site. The only house in the village built from stone it was probably built in by Davenport and the 1880 OS map shows it may have been the post office.

Holly Cottage, built in the early 1920's in an area known as Leas Yard. It is highly visible from the south heading towards the village. Set on the side of the hill it was commissioned by Misses Harrison to house the governess at the school. 1 and 2 Lea's Yard were built around 1935 in a similar style to Holly Cottage, both since have been extended.

The Council has produced a Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures. The list was last updated in 2016. [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/conservation](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/conservation).

There are currently no buildings or structures which have been nominated or added to this Register within Maer. Buildings can be added to the list during a review of the local register and some have been suggested within the Management Proposal section.

## **Building Analysis - Details materials and colours**

### Building styles

As in most areas, the buildings have a hierarchy of visual importance, dependent upon a range of factors, including their size, location and orientation, prominence, materials, design and function. It is also the combined effect of the buildings and their relationship with their layout, the landscaping, topography and vegetation which creates the character appearance and significance of the village.

### Principal Buildings

The main buildings which have presence and landmark status within the village are the hall, the church, the gatehouse and the stone walls which line the village. One also cannot ignore the bridge which announces the village.

### Positive Buildings and structures in the Conservation Area

It is notable that many of the smaller houses which make up the building stock of the village outside the hall are modest brick estate style cottages. 1,2 3 & 4 are of similar design and are painted brickwork. 5 & 6 are unpainted and slightly larger The Old Post Office and former bothy are prominent in the streetscene at the junction up to Leas Yard and the lane up to Bates Farm. Home Farm and its outbuildings are prominent within the village. Positive buildings are marked on the appraisal map MA2.

### Details including materials and colours

Some historic buildings have been painted but the appearance of the basic building material of the buildings in the Conservation Area is red brick for the buildings and stone for most of the walls although some walls around the Vicarage and lower estate yard are brick.

Roofs tend to have Staffordshire small plain clay tiles with some apex dormers. Roofs fascia boards and some have gable overhangs. Some buildings have patterned roofs with fish-scale tiles.

## **6. Summary of Issues**

Since the Conservation Area was designated in 1970 there have been a few changes, but for the most part these have been conversions replacement houses or extensions which have not harmed the overall character of the Conservation Area. A number of newer houses have been built but they have not had a harmful effect because they are set back from the road frontage and key views, often also set behind historic walls and hedges so blend into the character of the area.

The general arrangement of the roads and layout of the individual plots, the greenery and stone walls provide a feeling of intimacy and seclusion to Maer Conservation Area. This is supplemented by the presence of many mature trees and woodlands as well as the topography and landscape features. Together these aspects combine to make an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

Maer has retained its distinct and special character and appearance over the last 50 years.

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# **Draft Management proposals for Maer Conservation Area**

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## 1. Introduction

### The Purpose of the Management Proposals

The purpose is to provide a framework for further actions which although primarily the responsibility of the Borough Council, will also depend on the cooperation and enthusiasm of local people, organisations, those involved in village life and the Parish Council.

Change within historic areas is inevitable and this is also true within Conservation Areas which cannot be left to stagnate or be frozen in time. Living in a Conservation Area does not mean that alterations cannot be made, but it does mean extra care must be taken when considering what changes can be made.

The Council has a duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to assess proposals for change and whether these would meet the requirement to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The guidance provides further detail on how new development and alterations in Maer can be designed to make a positive contribution and complement the area's character.

## 2. Legislative Background

### The implications of Conservation Area designation.

Designation as a Conservation Area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the "preservation and/or enhancement" of the area:-

- The local authority is under a general duty to review designations 'from time to time' and to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area. There is a particular duty to prepare proposals (such as Conservation Area appraisals or grants schemes) to that end.
- In the exercise of any powers under the Planning Acts, in respect of land or buildings in a Conservation Area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
- Extra publicity must be given to planning applications affecting Conservation Areas. This is done through a site notice and an advertisement in the local newspaper.

- Planning permission is required for the demolition of any unlisted building in a Conservation Area and the local authority may take enforcement action or consider criminal prosecution if consent is not obtained.
- Written notice must be given to the Borough Council before works are carried out to any tree in the area to give the Council the opportunity to include the tree within a Tree Preservation Order if appropriate.
- The Borough Council may take steps to ensure that a building in a Conservation Area is kept in good repair through the use of Urgent Works Notices and Amenity Notices.
- The energy conservation expectations of the Building Regulations (Part L) do not necessarily apply to buildings within a Conservation Area.
- Powers exist for local authorities, Historic England or the Heritage Lottery Fund to provide financial grant schemes to help with the upkeep of buildings in Conservation Areas, if the area is economically deprived.
- The Council has a Historic Building Grant Fund for the repair and reinstatement of buildings and structures which are considered as heritage assets, namely Listed Buildings, positive historic buildings in Conservation Areas and those on the Council's Register of Locally Important Buildings.

### **3. The management of development and change in the historic environment**

It is important that local people understand the significance of their surroundings if they are to play their part. Some degree of change is inevitable in Conservation Areas and the issue is often not so much whether change should happen, but how it is undertaken. Owners and residents can minimise the negative effects of change by employing skilled advice when preparing development proposals and by avoiding unrealistic aspirations.

Community involvement is an integral part of the Local Plan process. The Parish Council is involved in the preparation a Neighbourhood Plan which should help to guide development.

It is always a good idea to check with the Planning Service before carrying out any work and if you need any advice on any planning issues.

- Planning permission is needed for extensions to houses in Conservation Areas if they extend beyond the side wall or if they have more than one storey to the rear and if it exceeds certain length and height restrictions.
- Planning permission is needed for external cladding to houses using stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles.
- Planning permission is needed for any alteration to the roof of a house in a Conservation Area.
- Planning permission is needed for the erection of any structure within the garden of a house in a Conservation Area if the structure proposed would be on land to the side or front of the house. This is especially important for sheds, garages and other outbuildings in gardens.

Where a building is statutorily listed separate legislation applies to all internal and external alterations which affect the special architectural or historic interest of the building and will require Listed Building Consent. Planning permission is also needed for all proposed buildings in the garden of a domestic listed building including gas/oil containers.

## New development and guidelines

High quality and carefully considered design of new development in Conservation Areas is crucial. This does not mean that it should simply copy surrounding properties, but it should always be sensitive to its context. Some principles are that:

On the whole new development should be 'of its time' rather than resorting to simply mimicking the design of the original houses in the Conservation Area. This can involve re-interpreting architectural styles and detailing in a contemporary manner.

There should be a strong logic in the choice of materials made, especially where changes in material are proposed. New buildings should always utilise high quality and robust materials and workmanship throughout.

### Extensions

An extension will permanently alter the character and appearance of a property. There will be cases where carefully designed minor extensions can be added without harm to the individual house or its setting, however in some cases it may not be possible to extend at all. In all cases, proposals for new additions must demonstrate an understanding of the site and its context. This means it is important to consider:

- The original building itself - extensions should be subordinate to and be inspired by the original form and character of the house, rather than dominating or obscuring it and its original design. In most cases roof forms, building materials and architectural details should reflect those of the original building, but it is also important that a new extension can be clearly read as a new addition. Achieving this is a careful balance.
- Neighbouring buildings – maintaining the space between houses is important. Side extensions (even single-storey ones) which close up the gaps between properties or between common boundaries, or result in a loss or reduction of mature landscaping, that would detract from the character and appearance of the street scene, should be avoided.
- The impact of the extension on the wider plot and landscaping. The

landscaped areas (particularly at the front and side) of individual plots on the whole make a recognised contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Any development in these areas must be carefully designed and be of an appropriate size in order to preserve the setting of the building and its relationship with others.

### Windows and Doors

With regards to any original windows - which make a significant contribution to the character of a building - the following principles should be followed:

- Windows should be repaired rather than replaced where possible.
- If the original frames, casements and glass are beyond repair then any replacements should be of the same material, replicate the original sub-division, profile and style of the window. On the whole this will involve the use of appropriate timber replacements.
- Care is needed if considering the use of double glazing as this can greatly alter the appearance of windows.
- Any important historical or architectural detailing to windows (e.g. leaded lights) should be retained.

### Building materials and details

Retaining original decorative features and using traditional materials preserves a building's character. Removal of building detail can spoil the appearance of individual buildings as it is often the quality and combination of the decorative features of the individual houses that contribute to their character. To ensure that this is preserved, the following principles should be followed:

- Good quality, matching materials should be used, with close attention paid to detailing.
- Any new walls or repairs should be built in matching materials.
- With regards to roofs - often it is the fixings rather than the tiles themselves that need replacing. However, if replacement is necessary, care must be taken to match the colour, texture, size and materials of the original

slates or clay tiles as they can come in a variety of shapes and sizes and patterns.

- Original chimney stacks and pots are considered important architectural features and should be retained.
- Any replacement rainwater goods should replicate historical profiles, materials and designs.

Repair rather than replacement is the preferred option, and upvc or aluminium for windows or doors are not generally suitable materials for use in an historic context.

The alteration of doors and windows are permitted development but may be withdrawn under an Article 4 Direction (see below). This additional control will seek to retain original and historic and architectural features which combine to create the Areas character.

#### Roofs and Chimneys

There is a presumption against the removal of chimneys even if not in use, since this is likely to adversely affect the special character and appearance of the Area. Slate or clay should be used in replacement of concrete or artificial slate.

Proposals to extend or alter roof spaces should consider the following general principles:

- Dormer windows should not be oversized but in proportion to the size of the roof and be of a design which harmonises with the architectural style and appearance of the property.
- Rooflights should be placed in discreet locations (preferably on rear roof slopes, away from the road side), be modest in size and of a slim-framed, traditional design (i.e. conservation type), fitting flush with the slope of the roof.

#### Satellite dishes

Satellite dishes and antennas in Conservation Areas are not permitted without planning permission if they are mounted on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto and is visible from a highway or a building which exceeds 15 metres in height. In these cases, planning permission would not normally be approved.

Generally for listed buildings, Listed Building Consent is practically always required for the installation of `antennas` and if the Borough Council considers that the installation will have an adverse effect of the special interest of the building, consent will usually be refused.

Conventional TV aerials and their mountings and poles are not considered to be `development` and therefore planning permission is not required.

#### Micro-generation and green energy

The government has relaxed the rules for the installation of solar PV or thermal equipment on houses, but in Conservation Areas, equipment needs planning permission if it is to be located on a wall or roof slope of the main elevation of the main house or outbuilding or on a Listed Building or a building in its garden.

Solar panels should be placed in discrete locations - preferably on the rear roof slope of the property and should sit as flush as possible with the roof slope.

#### Trees and Landscape

The contribution of trees (particularly mature trees and established planting) both along the roadside and in the gardens of many properties is important to the character of Maer Conservation Area and should be retained. Many trees in the area are affected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and permission must be sought to carry out works to any trees from the local authority. See plan on page 6 of the Appraisal.

Anyone wishing to remove or prune a tree within a Conservation Area not affected by a TPO must notify the Local Authority which then has 6 weeks to consider the proposal and respond. Work cannot proceed until the Council has responded or the 6 week period has expired. The purpose of this requirement is also to give the Local Planning Authority an opportunity to consider whether a Tree Preservation Order should be made in respect of the tree.

#### Boundary treatments

Many properties in the village retain the stone boundary walls often topped with hedges. They unify the effect of the village with their presence and their removal would have a

detrimental effect upon the character of the historic setting of the estate village. They should be retained and repaired where necessary.

When providing new boundary treatments high, solid boundary treatments should be avoided since they obscure the glimpsed views of the properties which contribute to the streetscene. Effective security should be provided through more subtle means which respect the area's semi-rural and 'open' character.

#### Demolition

Permission is needed for demolition all buildings in the Conservation Area (over 115 cubic metres). Demolition of historically significant buildings within the Conservation Area will not be permitted unless the building to be demolished can be proven to have a harmful or negative effect. Partial demolition does not require permission, but some control could be exercised through an Article 4 Direction, particularly in relation to boundary walls.

Single dwelling houses have considerable permitted development rights that enable some alterations to be carried out without the need for planning permission. These can include changes to windows and doors, roofs materials or construction of minor extensions and removal and building of walls/fences and railings. Although they may be minimal in each case, such alterations can have a cumulative effect that is damaging to historic areas. Where this kind of development is considered to be harming the character of an area, an Article 4 Direction can be considered.

#### Article 4 Directions

Permitted development rights are withdrawn if the Borough Council imposes an Article 4 Direction. This does not mean that development will not be possible. It does however mean that planning permission has to be sought and this allows for the merits of the proposal to be considered against the conservation interests of the area.

It has to be considered whether the exercise of permitted development rights would undermine the general aims and objectives for the historic environment in Maer and its local distinctiveness.

For example under an Article 4 Direction planning permission might then be required for

- The erection, alteration or removal of a wall, gate or fence at the front of a building can also be controlled as well as demolition.

Consideration will be given to controlling the removal of and erection of boundary treatments within the current Conservation Area, on the elevations which front a road given the part the stone walls play in giving the area its special character. Further consultation in this regard will be undertaken with affected residents and property owners.

Given the fact that residents have already changed windows and doors largely to upvc and this has not been particularly harmful given the nature of the changes and location of the properties, it is not proposed to remove this right via an Article 4 Direction.

#### **Management of the Hall and Parkland estate**

The Hall is located at the east end of a park which extends 1km to the west and is approximately 500m wide. The parkland is managed by the current owner and is generally all in the same ownership. The village properties are all in private ownership now.

The estate grounds are included within a higher level Countryside Stewardship Scheme (Natural England). This is an agri-environment scheme which considers wildlife, water and heritage conservation, below and above ground archaeology. The main focus of the existing scheme was to address the SSSI (Maer Pool) and some woodland management.

The Scheduled Ancient Monument on Berth Hill is considered to be at risk, mainly from bramble growth, and in need of continued management and a balance struck between the natural and historic environment. Other historic parkland features could be restored through this scheme. A management plan is required to better understand the significance of the historic landscape and sustain a long term programme of works for the estate. This is advocated by the owner of the estate and Historic England as a way forward.

### **Positive buildings and buildings on the Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures**

There are buildings of local significance which, although not statutorily listed, are nonetheless important to the history and character and cultural value of the Borough. The Appraisal has identified buildings that made a positive contribution to the character of the Area. In general, all listed buildings and those on the Council's local Register in a Conservation Area will be regarded as 'positive'.

However, there are often many more that, together, underpin the special interest of a place. Indeed there are many properties and structures which are relatively modest within Maer Conservation Area but play an important part in the overall defining character of the area. The following structures are those suggested for being considered for the council's local Register of Important Buildings. See Plan MA3.

- Maer War Memorial, A51
- Home Farm, Haddon Lane, Maer
- Bothy and Old Post Office, Maer
- The Old Laundry, Maer
- Holly Cottage, Maer
- Stone Cottage, Maer
- Former garden walls around The Garden House, Maer
- Village Hall (former school), Maer
- Weston Meres Farmhouse and barn (outside the present Conservation Area boundary)

#### 4. The Conservation Area Boundary Review

Local authorities are required by law to review their boundaries of existing Conservation Areas. This is to ensure that they still retain special architectural or historic interest. As part of the Appraisal process the whole Conservation Area was inspected and the robustness of the present boundary assessed. Guidance states that boundaries should be defensible and sensible ideally following clear features.

Maer Conservation Area contains buildings and features which are of different architectural styles and periods but all of the village buildings (except the Old Vicarage) have been built or influenced by previous owners of the Hall and estate and tend to be Victorian or later. It is relatively compact around the convergence of the lanes and is built up along the road edges and routes. The topography affects the experience one has of the area and generally defines the edges of the boundary. The entrances into the village have a significant impact on the character traversing down the lane under the bridge give a sense of intrigue and surprise. Trees and the natural landscape also play a role in defining the area and its boundary helping to shape views and vistas.

The boundary of the existing Conservation Area is considered appropriate and no parts are proposed to be taken out of the area. Consideration is given to 4 further areas to be included within the boundary.

1. Extend the boundary up Haddon Lane to include Primrose Cottage. The justification is that this property was also part of the estate and the stone walls are located along Haddon Lane as far as the cottage.

*It is accepted that the cottage was part of the estate under the Harrisons, although its date is unknown. This fact is not disputed nor diluted for being outside the boundary. The property has potential evidential historical and community value as part of the former estate but given the nature of the incremental changes and extensions to the property there is no aesthetic value to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. For this reason it is not proposed to*

*extend the boundary up Haddon Lane to include the cottage.*

2. Extend the boundary south to include Weston Meres Cottages and Weston Meres farm and barn. Justification is that the farmhouse and barn are impressive buildings and the cottages were part of the estate. The high architectural and aesthetic quality of the buildings and the stone walls continue up as far as the farm.

*It is not disputed that the farmhouse and outbuildings are of some considerable aesthetic value and they also have evidential, historical and value to the community as one of the three former farmsteads on the estate. The current boundary has a discernable feature of a hedge along a field boundary which is some distance already from the last cottages in the village. This is a sensible boundary which includes the core of the village and its houses. The cottages north of the farm, whilst part of the farm and estate in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, are of little aesthetic value, and it would potentially compromise the special character of the existing area to extend the boundary to include them. It is therefore not proposed to include the cottages and Weston Meres Farm but to suggest that the farmhouse and outbuilding is put forward for inclusion on the Council's Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures.*

*By not including Primrose Cottage and the Weston Meres farmstead the significance of the Maer estate and the Conservation Area is not devalued.*

3. Extend the boundary southwest to include more of Ashes Drumble woodland area of trees along the ridge of high ground. This includes the designed view from the hall into the landscape in between the trees up to the end of the view.

*The view from the hall is clearly designed and in itself a key vista from the Hall across the parkland setting. The current boundary includes the view as far as the road and small section of the hill. As the view continues up to the ridge alongside the woodland of Ashes Drumble, it is*

*proposed to accept this suggestion and extend the boundary to include the whole vista.*

4. Extend the boundary to the west to include an area of the parkland which is also within the designated Historic Park and Garden. This extends the boundary westwards to the track from the A51. This would also include the whole of the old trackway, a former road, across the parkland. At the end of the track the boundary then heads further west around the small group of houses and south along a hedge boundary which includes two important protected trees, before turning east to take in the woodland of The Ridding.

*The Conservation Area boundary seems to have stopped short on a former hedgerow and only included part of The Ridding woodland. The Park and Garden boundary reflects the estate shown on the first edition OS map. The track boundary is also a better boundary feature that at present is shown within the landscape. It is sensible to align the two boundaries in this location to reflect the parkland estate at this time and include the whole of the important and impressive woodland.*



## **5. Implementation**

It is important that the Maer Conservation Area should be as self-sustaining as possible if it is to remain in its present state. Achieving this requires management to control any necessary changes so that its special character and appearance is not adversely affected. Success will require commitment by all Borough Council departments and their partners such as building control and the Highways Authority to ensure the sensitive exercise of controls, in the best interests of the Conservation Area, and the sensitive deployment of any resources which may become available. Clearly a key part to the appearance of this Conservation Area is how the parkland is managed and this is helpful as much of the area is within single ownership. Other bodies such as Historic England, Natural England, Defra through the Stewardship Schemes all have a key part to play in the future management of the parkland environment.

Those who live and work in the Conservation Area must understand the need to take a contextual view of proposals rather than acting in isolation. Change is inevitable in Conservation Areas but it is how rather than if it is undertaken.

### **Priorities for action**

- Consultation with the community on the review of the Conservation Area and Management Proposals, including boundary changes.
- Formal adoption of the new Conservation Area boundary, if appropriate.
- Encourage community involvement to select buildings for the Register of Locally Important Buildings and Structures.
- Encouragement to produce a Conservation Management Plan for the parkland landscape for future management of the estate.
- Ensure that Buildings at Risk are dealt with appropriately and are removed from the At Risk Register.
- Investigate potential breaches of development control with a view to seeking changes or enforcement.
- Monitoring change and updating photographic records.
- Consideration of the implementation of an Article 4 Direction to ensure protection of the historic boundary walls within the village.