Old Matlock
Conservation Area Appraisal

6. Setting
SETTING

Preamble
This section of the Appraisal primarily considers the wider setting of the Conservation Area and the relationship between the area and the surrounding spaces. Key views, which exist within and extend out beyond the confines of the existing Conservation Area are shown on Figure 11.

Occupying the lower side slopes of the Derwent Valley, with the Bentley Brook running in an east/west alignment from Lumsdale to its confluence with the River Derwent, Old Matlock nestles beneath heights which rise up on all sides, with Matlock Moor to the north, Matlock Cliff to the east, Riber Hill to the south east, High Tor to the south west and Shining Cliff and Masson Hill to the west.

The landscape setting of the Conservation Area is one of contrasts, ranging from the tranquil, enclosed, seclusion of the lower lying river and brook and wooded slopes, to the bustle of busy Matlock Green and the open spaciousness and dramatic views of Old Matlock on the higher ground above the cliffs.

The sweeping meander of the River Derwent forms a large part of the northern boundary to Old Matlock Conservation Area. Beyond this is the developed urban form of Matlock Bridge (Dale Road) with the majority of buildings being used for retail purposes. Important open spaces such as Hall Leys Park, Matlock Cricket Club and Dene Fields Recreation ground also adjoin the northern boundary of the Conservation Area. Beyond these spaces, further to the north and east is the town of Matlock which spills down the valley side and overlooks the lower lying parts of Old Matlock Conservation Area.

The eastern boundary of the Conservation Area abuts both Matlock Dale Conservation Area and rising land associated with the parks and pleasure grounds of Pic Tor and High Tor.

Located between the railway embankment and the River Derwent in Matlock Dale Conservation Area, is Pic Tor Gardens (formerly Pig Tor Gardens). This is a public open space, wide yet enclosed, providing a green and tranquil area, close to the river. Trees line the riverbank, shading the grounds and the resultant space forms an attractive picnic spot. It leads to a walkway along the bank of the river Derwent towards Matlock and Hall Leys Park to the north-east, and to pathways which access High Tor and Matlock Bath to the south.
Within the Conservation Area, Pic Tor is the prominent outcrop of limestone upon which the War Memorial is sited. It looms above the river Derwent at a point where the river turns sharply southwards and is the highest point along the great cliff wall that marks the western edge of the Conservation Area. Views from Pic Tor across the valley to the north are particularly spectacular and panoramic and demonstrate the extent of built development to the north, west and east of Old Matlock.

The Pic Tor War Memorial was erected in this position, and not in the town centre, so that all the Parish of Matlock could be viewed from its position on the hill top. Equally it could be seen from any part of the Parish. However accumulated tree growth, mainly scrub, has led to the loss of this original concept.

Fields to the south-east of Old Matlock, though predominantly beyond the Conservation Area boundary, have a strong bearing on its character as they extend out along the Alfreton Road. Rising above Old Matlock as far as Riber Castle the rolling patchwork of fields, hedgerows and small copses of trees can clearly be seen from the road and provide the foreground for views across the Conservation Area from footpaths that traverse the hillside. The hedgerows and wooded areas that are features of the Conservation Area, being in such close proximity, beneficially influence the character of developed areas particularly those to the southern side of Church Street.

A recent development of four properties is located just beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area at St. Giles Manor to the east of Church Street. It is relatively well screened by the properties which line the east side of the road, but where it can be seen from a public vantage point it is considered to assimilate well with the context of the surrounding streetscene. It demonstrates the use of sandstone in a traditional method of construction which is in keeping with the wider area. It also follows a more traditional pattern of design using a larger ratio of walling to window openings and the inclusion of chimney-stacks, all of which is complementary to the ‘grain’ and setting of the adjacent Conservation Area.
To the south of the Conservation Area the built development extends to the village of Starkholmes, but the majority of land is agricultural in character.

On entering the Conservation Area from the southern approach, the immediate aspect is the long-range view across to the urban form of Matlock and the buildings which line the hillside of Matlock and Matlock Bank. Particularly evident landmarks are the impressive form of County Hall and Rockside.

Close to the eastern boundary of Old Matlock lies Lumsdale Conservation Area and a large area of open space associated with Huntbridge Recreation Ground. This eastern approach from Tansley is visually pleasing with mature trees lining the road and wide and spacious grassed verges.

The visual experience offered by views across and beyond the Conservation Area is extremely varied. Some views, within the limestone gorge and woodland on the western edge are highly constrained, channelled or truncated by either the landform, the vegetation or both. Others, from higher ground in the churchyard are broad and expansive.

The church itself is a prominent landmark building and focal point and is frequently glimpsed in views throughout the Conservation Area, whilst long-range views to features within the surrounding countryside can be gained from even the lowest lying parts of the area.

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from a variety of vantage points both within and beyond the Conservation Area boundary.

The approach into Matlock Green from the north is via Chesterfield Road (A632) which descends into the shallow valley base. As it enters the Conservation Area at Lime Tree Road, views are constrained, with buildings lining both sides of the road. However long range views, again of Riber Castle and the Church tower are also evident out beyond the associated rooftops. Whilst there is a sense of entering an ‘urban’ space at Matlock Green, the visual setting is predominantly rural.

Further west the setting of the Conservation Area is contained by 20th century housing which has developed along Alfreton Road and Mornington Rise.