STRUCTURES AND SPACES

Preamble
This section primarily considers the relationships between the structures and the spaces within the Conservation Area, their historic and current relationships and identifies the main factors that characterise the area.

The omission of any particular building, feature, view or space within this Appraisal should not be taken to imply that it is of no merit or interest.

Church Street
Many of the properties at this southern part of the Conservation Area step down the hill, respecting the topography. Other than for mid to late 20th century development, which is constructed in brown brick, the more holistic material used along Church Street is sandstone, which provides warm colours and a variety of tones.

The majority of properties face directly onto Church Street particularly at this southern end, with historically, little ‘backland’ development, although more recently modern development has occurred at St. Giles Manor, just beyond properties on Church Street and the Conservation Area boundary. Agricultural rough pasture extends beyond the built form and forms a setting for the Conservation Area to the south and east side of Church Street.

Church Street is characterised by semi-detached or small terraced rows of cottages, mostly two-storey with the majority having small, enclosed front gardens. Some of the larger detached properties are situated within a more generous plot size, such as The Rectory and Wheatsheaf House, which is indicative of their original ‘higher’ status within the locality.

Many of the cottages retain their chimney-stacks and some traditional pots remain, providing a detail of interest to roof ridges and skyline views.

Unfortunately few original doors and windows remain, with later alterations in place.

Traditionally, front gardens to cottages facing onto the street were enclosed by walls, in some cases surmounted by railings. Walls along Church Street, vary in height and construction detail but are predominantly sandstone, punctuated by stone gateposts for pedestrian access. Some are formally built using stone blocks set to course, others more informal of dry-stone construction. A variety of copings to walls are also evident, with examples of half-round, flat slabs, triangular, ‘cock and hen’ and shaped/ moulded detail. Walls and their associated elements, - copings, piers etc., were often designed with the perceived ‘status’ of the host building in mind.
The majority of vernacular cottages demonstrate simple hewn gate-posts to their pedestrian entrance, others are more formal and impressive.

There are few remaining examples of traditional iron railings, as many have been replaced with modern insertions. The railings to No. 60 Church Street are an example of an original detail.

Unfortunately modern car parking requirements have led to some of these boundary frontages being removed, which has resulted in an ‘interruption’ to the sense of enclosure in the streetscene and a ‘blur’ in definition between highway and building line. This is evident in a number of properties along Church Street.
The earlier origins of Church Street are evident in the sweeping curvature of the street as it descends towards Matlock Green and in the earlier properties whose gables face onto the street.

The ‘triangular’ area close to the Church, where the gradient of the street eases and a broader space is formed, is an important open space around which is clustered a number of impressive buildings, the majority being listed for their special architectural and/or historic interest. These include The Rectory, Wheatsheaf House, the Duke William, No. 85 Church Street (the former Kings Head PH) and the Church of St. Giles. There are a number of substantial stone retaining walls, particularly around the Church. The ‘triangle’ itself is a gently sloping, grassed area, elevated from the pavement and street, surrounded by a pedestrian walkway and bounded by robust coursed sandstone walls with substantial shaped copings.

At the heart of this space is a mature oak tree, planted as a memorial in 1924 (as a replacement for an earlier tree) and an impressive feature in views along Church Street. This calm space with its elevated seating area, beneath a canopy of oak and yew, allows for views of the Church and its attractive setting to be appreciated.

This part of the Conservation Area is heavily vegetated, with mature trees and planting in the churchyard and in domestic gardens close by. In addition long-range views can be enjoyed across the surrounding rooftops, over open fields and beyond to Riber Castle.

In views along Church Street, the lych-gate to the Church forms an interesting focal point, with an impressive backdrop array of mature trees, the Church being set in an elevated position and highly visible from many parts of the Conservation Area.
Due to the topography of the street, there are contained views in both directions along Church Street. No. 15 Knowleston Place terminates the vista, at the base of the steep hill, which is Stoney Way. Historic surfacing still remains evident here, and within the churchyard, and this surfacing and the sandstone retaining walls which line both sides of Stoney Way are significant features within the streetscene.

Overall Church Street displays a semi-rural character, enhanced by the narrowness of the highway, the lack of footway sections and the linearity of buildings lining the edge of the street. On the curving and steep descent to Matlock Green there is a visual and physical ‘pinch-point’ in the road close to No. 60 Church Street. This ‘pinch-point’ causes problems for passing traffic as well as for pedestrians as there is very little footway.

Opposite No. 60 Church Street a stone lintel above a flight of stone steps engraved as ‘St. Giles Terrace’ forms a beguiling entrance to access a terrace of cottages, set at right angles to the street.

High, stone retaining walls, fences and vegetation to this part of the streetscene serve to contain the view and increase the sense of enclosure. There are a number of opportunities for ‘glimpses’ out between buildings, to rooftops and open land to the south and east.
Towards Matlock Green several properties are set at an angle to the street, such as Tag Hill Cottage and properties opposite. The road widens near the entrance to Brook Lea and again allows long-range views to the north and glimpses between the buildings towards the Bentley Brook. Historically this was an important open space although its original function is unclear.

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Church Street widens to create an open space currently used for car parking.

Twentieth century development at Brook Lea unfortunately does not accord with the historic character or appearance of the Conservation Area in that the large 'blocks' of development, constructed in a dark brick are out of context with the predominant 'grain' of the area. The vista to Matlock Green is enclosed by the Horseshoe Public House, which is currently vacant and awaiting redevelopment.

There are impressive principal views from St. Giles Church and churchyard to the urban form of Matlock and in contrast south and easterly views across open fields to Riber Castle on the ridge of Riber Hill. The Church is evident in many views both within and from beyond the Conservation Area boundary. There are frequent glimpses of the Church between buildings and from lower lying parts of the area. In its prominent elevated position, it serves to orientate the onlooker with the surrounding area as well as confirming the Church as the most prominent landmark within the Conservation Area.

The Church of St. Giles and Churchyard

Located above the limestone cliffs the Church of St. Giles is an important local landmark. It is situated within an expansive churchyard which extends to the edge of the cliffs on its northern side and leads directly to the War Memorial on Pic Tor.

An extensive churchyard with views to rising ground to the north-west (above) and to Matlock Bank (below).

View from Matlock Green towards Old Matlock.

South easterly aspect from the Church of St. Giles.
Pic Tor Lane

Pic Tor Lane, which forms part of the south-west boundary of the Conservation Area, is a steep pedestrian lane on an east/west axis, marked by impressive retaining walls particularly at the eastern end, and which descends from Church Street to the western extremities of the Conservation Area.

Walls, of random rubble construction, along with associated vegetation, enclose the lane and constrained views are channelled along it in both directions. It is characterised, not only by the woodland through which it passes, which is typical of the belts of trees and under-storey shrubs that occupy the steeper slopes, but also by its (partially) revealed historic surfacing. Some remaining large historic sandstone setts are evident at the western end of the lane, as are the stone kerbs which are revealed along parts of its length despite recent resurfacing works.

Robust sandstone structures are situated along its route, including retaining walls and the railway tunnel. These and the modern box girder footbridge which crosses the river, all lead the pedestrian through a distinctly rural environment out into the more urban contrast of the busy A6 road to Matlock / Matlock Bath.

Pic Tor Lane also provides access to a series of pathways which traverse Pic Tor, some at a lower level close to the railway and some steeper paths which access the War Memorial at the summit.