Old Matlock
Conservation Area Appraisal

8. Problems, Pressures & Capacity for Change

• Condition
• Negative and Neutral Factors
PROBLEMS, PRESSURES AND THE CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

Condition

Overall the condition of structures and land within the Conservation Area is considered to be good. Generally, with some exceptions, buildings and structures are well maintained, as are domestic gardens. Open spaces used by the public, such as Pic Tor, Pic Tor Gardens (in Matlock Dale Conservation Area), the riverside walk, Knowleston Gardens and the Churchyard of St Giles are also in good to fair condition.

However, some of the shop fronts to retail properties at Matlock Green are suffering deterioration from lack of maintenance. In places, timber sections have rotted and the stone plinths / stall risers have suffered long term erosion from weather and salt damage. Upper floors of the retail properties, also appear to be in a poor condition.

Stone boundary walls, particularly where adjacent to the road are also showing signs of decay from weathering and salt damage and in places spalling has occurred.

Buildings at Risk: Old Matlock Conservation Area has one building within its boundary that is on the Councils Register of ‘Buildings at Risk’. This Register contains all listed buildings in the District considered to be at some degree of risk. This can be severe, where the structure has been subject to wholesale damage, or relatively low-key risk, where a building is empty and slowly deteriorating. The District Council monitors the buildings on this Register on an annual basis.

No 3 Knowleston Place is the only listed building within the Conservation Area considered to be ‘at risk’. The risk degree is ‘A’ (highest category of risk) based on it being vacant and in poor condition. It is considered that there is slow deterioration and decay of the building, which is continuing without being addressed by the owner.
Surface Treatment: There are some publically visible spaces which are in a poor condition or have been given an inappropriate surface repair or lack appropriate maintenance.

Area used for car parking space is not well maintained with uneven and patchy surfacing.

Negative Factors
Negative factors are those elements which are considered to impact negatively on the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Windows and doors: Residential property is privy to a number of permitted development rights, which means that for many alterations planning permission is not required. Alterations to windows and doors are permitted development in a conservation area unless there is an Article 4 Direction in place. Modern replacement windows and doors to historic property, where these are either a non-traditional design (for the period of the building) and/or, an inappropriate construction material (such as upvc as a replacement for timber) are highly regrettable. The cumulative effect of such works can have a deleterious effect on the special character and appearance of a Conservation Area.

Inappropriate window and door patterns and materials can have a cumulative negative effect on an historic area

Satellite dishes and aerial masts: There are a number of satellite dishes located on principal elevations facing onto the highway, which are detrimental to the character and appearance of the properties and to the wider conservation area, as are prominent free-standing aerials. In a conservation area, satellite dishes installed onto an elevation facing onto a highway require planning permission.

Satellite dishes on principal elevations facing the highway

Aerial masts projecting above garden walls can have a negative visual impact on the Conservation Area

Loss of boundary walls / railings: There has been a loss of some of the boundary walls to residential frontages to create open parking areas and this has resulted in an ‘interruption’ to the sense of enclosure in the streetscene and in some cases a ‘blur’ in definition between highway and building line.

Many of the original railings to properties have been lost historically. Whilst the reintroduction of railings, where the originals have been lost, is generally to be welcomed, in some cases the replacement railings are of an inappropriate design or lack a traditional method of construction.
Modern development: In respect of mid to late twentieth century development, there are examples within the Conservation Area where the resulting design - scale, mass, form and external appearance - coupled with the use of inappropriate materials is out of context with the ‘grain’ i.e. the historic character and appearance of the surrounding area.  

Large ‘blocks’ of development, constructed in a dark coloured brick are out of context with the ‘grain’ of the area.

There are also examples of where extensions could have been designed to be more in keeping with the host building.

Modern fencing: There are a number of properties where modern fencing panels have been introduced, particularly where these have been constructed above the existing robust stone-walls. These appear out of context within a traditional historic street-scene.

Above & below: Modern fencing panels atop existing walls

Signage: Inappropriate signage, particularly to retail premises and within the highway, can be visually intrusive and out of keeping with the historic environment. Not only does it detract from the area, it often leads to a decrease in economic activity.

Above & Below: Overbearing and visually intrusive signage
Waste and recycling facilities. Bins which are not appropriately screened or landscaped can create a visual ‘eyesore’, when seen from the public realm.

Modern garage blocks coupled with large areas of bland surfacing are also considered to impact negatively on the area, by creating ‘gaps’ in a street pattern or by the use of inappropriate materials.

Neutral Factors
Factors which do not impact negatively on the area but which could be improved to the enhancement of the area.

A bespoke design of bus stop and kiosk could positively enhance this prominent space.

Capacity for Change
The majority of Old Matlock Conservation Area is situated within a Settlement Framework Boundary (within the Derbyshire Dales Adopted Local Plan) which means that there is generally a presumption in favour of appropriate development, via the planning process. However, there is limited capacity for further development in the more residential and developed areas of Old Matlock.

The retail and commercial uses in Matlock Green has been in place for many years and the economic vitality of that area is currently reliant on the base that is established there, remaining buoyant, in the current economic climate. An upturn in the economy could see retail/commercial property in Matlock Green thriving and the area would benefit from further investment. In the event that national or local funding became available, this could provide similar benefits to the Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme which operated in Matlock Bridge with some success, in the early years of the 21st century. This focussed investment on restoration and repair of the historic environment coupled with wider economic regeneration initiatives.

Over the last decade there have been positive economic developments undertaken. No. 22 Matlock Green has been restored and refurbished, initially to operate as a gallery and now continues in use as a bridal showroom (Gracie Bleu Bridal). Tawney House has been redeveloped to create a mixed-use scheme with residential apartments and offices and a Café on the principal frontage. There is also bed and breakfast accommodation available on Knowleston Place. These businesses appear to be continuing to operate well, despite the downturn in the economy. Located just beyond Tawney House is a successful architectural practice, (Evans Vettori). The tyre depot (Mr Tyres Ltd) has also retained its commercial standing in the area.

Retail premises at Matlock Green also continue to operate. Currently there is Matlock Green Fish and Chip shop, a café and bakery (The Loaf) a hairdressers at No.5 Lime Tree Road (A Million Hairs), a trophy shop (Hellisons), Bobbins, Xtreme and Matlock Green News Agents. The Red Lion Hotel and the Duke William are the remaining public houses as the Horseshoe PH is currently empty. Huntbridge House is in use as the Headquarters for the British Red Cross and No. 42 Matlock Green was successfully converted from a mill to residential accommodation several years ago. Overall there are very few empty properties and the capacity for any substantial change in the area is therefore limited.