7. Problems, Pressures & Capacity for Change
   • Condition
   • Negative & Neutral Factors
PROBLEMS / PRESSURES AND CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

Condition

The quality of the environment within the Conservation Area is considered to be good, with most buildings and structures being maintained to a high standard. Generally, with a few exceptions, buildings and structures are in a good condition. There are no buildings/structures within the Conservation Area considered by the Council to be ‘at risk’. Riber Castle once in a ruinous condition is now wind and watertight and awaiting full restoration as a conversion to apartments. Similarly open areas of agricultural land and hedgerows to the lanes associated with the village appear reasonably well maintained, as are domestic gardens. Verges to the roadside are neat and tidy without being overly manicured, or over domesticated by garden planting and therefore maintain the rural character of the hamlet. The lanes and public foot-paths also appear to be in reasonable condition. The only area where some maintenance appeared to be necessary was to some of the dry-stone walls which provide a boundary to fields and lanes.

Negative Factors

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

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 force, which can control such development. Modern replacement windows and doors, to historic property, in terms of both non-traditional designs (for the period of the building), and inappropriate construction material (such as upvc as a replacement for timber) is highly regrettable, and there are examples of this in the hamlet. The cumulative effect of such works can have a deleterious effect on the special character and appearance of a Conservation Area. A few satellite dishes were noted in the hamlet which can be detrimental to the character and appearance of a property and to the wider conservation area. Whilst it is appreciated that such dishes are a part of everyday life, their impact can be reduced by siting them carefully to reduce their visual impact. In a conservation area, satellite dishes installed onto an a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto, and is visible from a highway, require planning permission.

There are also examples of porches and conservatories within the hamlet which do not always integrate with the building to which they are associated, or in respect of assimilating with the ‘grain’ of the area. As previously mentioned, porches have no historical precedent on vernacular property and the addition of a porch seems to have increased dramatically in the latter part of the 20th century. Indeed many of these types of structures, were added to properties in the 1960s and 1970s. Some are constructed in stone, or are of timber and glass to create an enclosed space. Consequently many of these appear over large and out of scale to the building to which they are attached and diminish the traditional vernacular character and appearance of the property and detract from the wider Conservation Area.

Conservatories are also mentioned in Section 4 ‘Building Materials and Details’. Off the peg modular conservatories (in upvc or painted timber) represent a building form which has no traditional or historical precedent for domestic vernacular property. To attempt to integrate such a building element onto traditional historic property, often results in disharmony in proportion and context and leads to unfortunate abutments, junctions and detailing with the host building. Consequently the physical and visual impact of such an addition can
also severely impinge upon the character and appearance of the property and also diminish the special character and appearance of the wider Conservation Area.

More transitional modern elements can also impact on the visual quality of an area. Wheelie bins (and bright coloured grit bins) whilst a necessity of life are not an attractive feature in the street-scene.

Neutral Factors

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

The open aspect of grass verges to the sides of the lanes are a part of the rural character of the area. These are generally flat areas of grass or slightly raised verges with informal kerbstone edges. In some places, notably at the junction of Carr Lane and Riber Road, timber posts have been introduced, presumably to discourage parking on the wider verge adjacent to the boundary wall of Riber Hall. Whilst these are not considered to have a particularly harmful impact on the area, they do present a slightly alien form within the context of the rural landscape. Their impact could be lessened by a reduction in height, which would still achieve the desired result of discouraging parking.

Pressures and Capacity for Change

The original reasons for the designation of Riber are still considered as pertinent today as they were in 1971. New development within or adjacent to the Conservation Area could potentially harm the area and inappropriate development could easily harm the scale and balance in the relationship of settlement to landscape. Similarly, it is still considered that the land opposite Riber Hall is a sensitive site and an integral part of the character of the hamlet, and should remain as open land, as is land fronting the Castle. It is also recognised that minor alterations have had some impact and if continued could potentially have a damaging impact both individually and cumulatively on the hamlet.

However Conservation Area designation is not intended to restrict all forms of development but aims to ensure that where development is in accordance with the planning policies and legislation, it respects the nature, scale, design and materials found in the area. It also attempts to ensure that development is in keeping with the special qualities of its defined character and appearance, documented within this Character Appraisal.

Development in any part of the District has to be in conformity with both national and local planning policy guidance. As such under the current policies in the Adopted Local Plan (or the Emerging Local Plan), Riber has no defined Settlement Framework

Overall resident and visitor parking does not appear to cause any significant problems within the hamlet, as most properties have off road parking facilities.

It was also noted that some traditional outbuildings are being utilised for garaging. Whilst this is a valid use for such a building, the introduction of traditional details such as side-opening doors would have been more in keeping with the local vernacular, rather than the modern ‘up and over’ doors.
Boundary. This means that proposals such as the introduction of further residential development in the hamlet are unlikely to be supported as they would be contrary to these policies (see Section 8). Similarly there are also planning constraints where existing non-residential properties are proposed for residential conversion. In both cases – new build and conversion – such development would have to have exceptional reasons as to why it should be supported. Therefore pressure for additional residential development in the area, at the current time is likely to be negligible.

That said, it is appreciated that several years ago, planning permission and listed building consent were granted for the conversion of Riber Castle and its outbuildings into 35 residential apartments alongside 10 new build properties. These permissions were granted following much controversy and local public concern but in essence were approved as an ‘exception’ to normal planning considerations insofar as the ‘enabling development’ (i.e. the proposed new build) was to fund the works to repair, restore and retain the Castle as a Grade II listed building and as an iconic landmark within the landscape of Matlock. The hamlet will no doubt experience some additional traffic movement once this development is completed, although parking should be accommodated within the confines of the site.

It is envisaged that it is more likely that future pressures for development will arise from individual householder applications to ‘add to’ or ‘to improve’ the existing properties by extensions, upgrading works, garages etc. More recent planning approvals, (which are generally limited in number) have been for extensions and changes of use. Applications would be considered in the context of their impact on the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

As such, whilst the District Council are undertaking this Appraisal and reviewing the character and appearance of the area, the introduction of an Article 4 Direction to control certain types of permitted development also has to be considered. This is in the light of the degree of any perceived ‘threat’ to the area that such development might potentially cause. Whilst issues have been raised above in respect of certain types of development within the hamlet, it is not considered necessary at this point in time to recommend the introduction of a specific Direction for properties in Riber Conservation Area. However this should be a matter for future monitoring and review.