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## 1 Introduction

**1.1** This Conservation Area Management Plan for Westleigh follows on from the Conservation Area Character Appraisal for the village that was adopted in January 2013.

**1.2** The management plan document will act as a reference and guide for all those who make decisions which may impact on the special character of Westleigh – the Council, property owners, tenants, businesses, planners, developers, designers, and statutory undertakers and service providers.

**1.3** The policy context for this management plan is set out in the Planning Acts – particularly the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, as amended October 2008 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended April 2008.

**1.4** The special character of Westleigh is identified in the preceding character appraisal. It is the purpose of this document to lay down what actions will be taken in the future to safeguard and enhance that character. Part of this process is to inform and advise local residents and businesses so that they better understand how their actions can affect the historic character of the area.

**1.5** It is of fundamental importance that owners and contractors recognise that their actions can, and do, have a significant impact on the character and appearance of Westleigh. Good decisions and sympathetic works do take more thought and can often cost more; but the rewards are great and will be appreciated in years to come by future generations. All actions, good and bad, form part of the legacy we leave.

## 2 SWOT Analysis

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Historic buildings provide a strong and distinctive local character.	Modern buildings South of the main core of the village.		
Views into the surrounding landscape, particularly across the estuary to the West and Northwest across the estuary.			
Conformity of traditional materials, particularly within the roofscape.			
Generally good condition of buildings.			
Dual aspect of several properties.			

## 3 Archaeology

**3.1** Westleigh has great archaeological potential. The conservation area covers the original settlement which consisted of a series of farm houses and tighter groupings of farm labourers' cottages. Due to the density of development here there has been little scope for archaeological investigation and as such opportunities to improve archaeological understanding should be taken wherever possible. The lack of recovered archaeological evidence from the village is more likely a result of very limited investigation, rather than any real lack of evidence.

**3.2** The village had its origins in the Saxon period and first enters the written record in Domesday Book (1086). As such there is potential for archaeological evidence spanning back over 1000 years in and around the village. The wider landscape also contains examples of earlier prehistoric remains and artifacts and it is possible that further evidence from this period remains undiscovered within the modern village.

**3.3** Where work is subject to the planning process it will be considered within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and may be subject to relevant conditions such as a period of professional quality archaeological investigation and recording.

**3.4** When work not requiring consent is being carried out by private owners they should be aware of historic features; such as artifacts and wall footings to changes in colour of the earth. If anything is found people are encouraged to contact the Council for advice, or the regional Finds Liaison Officer via a local museum in the case of portable artifacts (pottery, coins etc). Significant finds ought to be recorded to add to our understanding of the history of Westleigh and its development over time, and even relatively small finds that could at first glance be considered insignificant can add to our understanding of the village's history.

**3.5** Statutory undertakers doing trench work ought to seek advice before starting and agree a watching brief where appropriate – for example, if cable undergrounding is carried out within the conservation area or when new service runs are being installed.

### 4 Roofscape

**4.1** The roofscape is a prominent part of the conservation area, as a result of the landscape setting of the village, with views from higher ground to the South of the conservation area and elevated areas such as around the village hall and Chimneys. The appraisal identifies several key views in which the roofscape plays its part, but it is not possible to identify every important view within the appraisal and the roofscape is generally of importance throughout the conservation area. The enclosed streets hide many roof slopes from view from short distances although some can be seen and others can even be considered prominent, particularly those of lower, more vernacular properties.

**4.2** Other features such as chimneys, ridges and rainwater goods, add further interest to the roofscape in the village, especially the handful of axial chimney stacks and thatched properties. The main roofing material is slate, often imported from Wales although some examples from Devon and Cornwall (Delabole).

#### Chimneys

**4.3** Loss of chimneys is nearly always detrimental to the character of the roofscape and can interfere with the pattern of the streetscene. Indeed chimneys form a major element of the streetscape, being particularly prominent on properties such as Chimneys, the Church House and the Westleigh Inn; although chimneys also make a positive contribution to the streetscape elsewhere.

**4.4** It is seldom necessary to remove a chimney and this ought to be resisted with repair often being a less costly option. Removal of a chimney should be avoided unless there are extenuating circumstances such as serious structural concerns that have been professionally identified. The buildings within the village have retained their chimneys, but the potential threat of their removal should not be ignored.

**4.5** Alterations damage the distinctive character of chimneys by the application of smooth, crisp render that hides stonework or flattens an uneven surface. Removal of drip slates and historic pots also detracts from the character of the area and should be avoided wherever possible.

#### Rainwater Goods

**4.6** There is a good degree of survival of historic cast iron rainwater goods within the conservation area. These are typically of traditional profiles, being half round or ogee. These rainwater goods add to the historic character of their buildings and enrich the streetscape, and have the added advantage that they can be painted to be in keeping with the building's wider colour scheme.

**4.7** In some cases rainwater goods carry decorative features and embellishments and these are largely impossible to replicate in modern materials.

**4.8** Correctly maintained cast iron rainwater goods can have a functional life in excess of 100 years, and when replacement is needed there are still suppliers of traditional gutter profiles available. With improved modern paints, maintenance periods can stretch to several years. Lightweight cast aluminium rainwater goods may also be suitable for use on some buildings.

**4.9** Plastic is in many ways an inferior modern product for use as rainwater goods, because it can be affected by exposure to sunlight and become brittle relatively quickly. Although plastic rainwater goods can last for over 25 years it is unlikely that an entire gutter system will last this long without some sections splitting or warping and requiring replacement.

**4.10** Plastic rainwater goods do not accept paint well and are available in a limited range of colours; typically fading of the plastic occurs within the first 5-10 years where exposed to direct sunlight. Modern box profile rainwater goods do not fit well with historic buildings as traditional guttering was never produced in these forms.

### **Slate As A Roof Covering**

**4.11** The dominant roofing material within the conservation area is natural slate, much of which arrived by sea from Wales, although some examples of Delabole slate remain.

**4.12** A much wider variety of slate is now available in the UK, including slate imported from Spain, South America and China. Some of these imported slates may be suitable for roofing on new buildings or buildings not in prominent locations but their use on prominent historic roofs should be avoided as they have a noticeably different appearance, especially when wet. The implications of fuel miles of imported materials also favours more locally sourced slates.

**4.13** New slate should be fixed to roofs using nails, as this is the traditional method. By using the correct double lap, wind lift can be avoided and so is not justification for the use of clips. With some imported slates the recommended use of clips is to disguise the fact that the slate is of poor quality and will split if holed for nailing. As such, slate from a source that recommends the use of clip fixings should be looked at cautiously.

**4.14** It should be remembered that slate is a highly durable natural material and it is highly unlikely that an entire roof needs to be re-covered. In most cases slates slip because their nails have exceeded their functional life and the slates can be salvaged and re-attached with new nails. Roofs that feature rag slate, or slate in diminishing courses are particularly important and are also particularly vulnerable. Opportunistic and unscrupulous contractors have been known to offer owners of such buildings an

amazingly cheap price to re-roof in artificial or imported slate, knowing that the rag or random slate they reclaim can be sold on or re-used on much more lucrative work elsewhere.

### Turnerised Coatings

**4.15** Many of the slate roofs in Westleigh have been sensitively repaired over the years. So far only one (Old Westliving Farm) has been treated with waterproof bituminous coatings applied over hessian, in a process called 'turnerisation'. This process was first developed in the 1880's and as such is not a new technique, although the process is still carried out with some refinements having been developed over the years.

**4.16** The nature of this type of repair is a short term one as the coating softens in hot weather and becomes brittle in very cold weather, and after 10 years or so the coating begins to fail. This means that either the process must be repeated and an additional coat of the treatment applied at further cost, or the roof must be repaired in some other way.

**4.17** The major drawback of the process is that once applied it is difficult, time consuming and costly to remove. A repair of a slate roof may be more expensive but will last significantly longer (easily 80+ years) and the majority of the slates can often be reused after this period, with only the timber batons and nails needing replacement. After turnerisation it is almost always the case that all of the slates must be discarded, leading to a much higher cost as new slates must then be purchased.

**4.18** With people moving home more often than in the past the temptation to make cheap, short term, repairs might appear increasingly attractive, however in most cases this option is a false economy.

**4.19** Property surveyors will be only too aware that the presence of turnerised coatings will potentially have future cost implications for buyers as the coating implies that the roof covering itself was defective and the repair has only a limited lifespan as well as damaging the prospect of recycling the existing roofing materials. As such turnerisation may also have a negative impact on resale value of properties.

### Thatch

**4.20** The majority of thatched properties within the conservation area are also listed buildings and as such alteration of their roofing material away from thatch, or to alternative thatching materials, would require listed building consent.

**4.21** The thatched properties produce a marked contrast with the slate roofed properties within the village, both in colour and texture but also in the softer roof forms that the material produces.

### Other Roofing Materials

**4.22** Within the village there are other roofing materials which can be seen. Notably artificial slate has been used as a replacement for natural slate on several properties. The texture and appearance is much smoother and more consistent than natural slate, and the difference is particularly noticeable when the material is wet.

**4.23** Interlocking clay tiles also appear on a number of properties, particularly on attached outbuildings and extensions, such as at Chimneys, but also on houses themselves such as at Hillside Cottage. The material is also widely used on the more modern houses within the village, outside of the conservation area producing a notable contrast between the old and the new.

**4.24** Some examples of corrugated sheet metal roofing also appears on the lean-to additions at the rear of properties opposite the Westleigh Inn, most probably as a 20th Century replacement for previously clay tile covered roofs.

## **5 Walls**

**5.1** Westleigh possesses a mix of buildings constructed of a variety of materials. The majority of buildings are rendered, either applied over local stone or cob. A small number of buildings of exposed stone (mainly outbuildings, such as those opposite the Westleigh Inn) and brick (Elm Cottage and Westliving House) exist. Repointing is a major long-term maintenance consideration on the brick and stone buildings and boundary walls, while maintenance and repair of render is the largest issue with the majority of buildings which have been rendered.

### **Repointing**

**5.2** Repointing of historic masonry is a process that needs to be carried out over the period of a building's history. The major risk this poses to historic buildings is when an ill-informed owner or contractor elects to use modern Portland cement to repoint historic masonry.

**5.3** Traditional buildings were designed to be porous, the thickness of their walls ensured that the inner surface would not get wet and that when dry weather returned the wall could dry out again. As the traditional lime mortar was softer than the surrounding brick much of the evaporation of moisture occurred through the mortar joints. In this way the mortar itself was sacrificial, slowly weathering away and eventually needing to be replaced by the process of repointing.

**5.4** When modern cement is used the method of moisture transfer is altered. The Portland cement is harder and impermeable and as such moisture transfer is forced to occur through the face of the brick, eventually causing the decay of the brick itself. Portland cement is also brittle and inflexible and while lime mortar will allow a degree of movement within the building fabric, cement will crack at the slightest movement allowing moisture to further penetrate into the building along these cracks.

### **Rendering**

**5.5** Render was traditionally applied to buildings for a variety of reasons, either to cover up a poor quality building material which was visually unpleasant, or to protect a particularly porous building material, such as cob, against damp ingress. Equally during the early 19th Century, wars with France had led to the high cost of building materials, and using poor quality stone or brick and using render to give a more aesthetically pleasing result became common.

**5.6** Traditionally render was lime based, in the same way that mortars were lime based. Re-rendering a building in modern cement based renders or applying modern barrier paints can cause similar problems to repointing in modern cement mortars by changing the way in which moisture moves around the fabric of the building.

**5.7** Movement within a building almost invariably leads to cracking of the hard but brittle cement render allowing moisture to get in through the cracks. The impervious nature of the cement render will trap this moisture within the wall and force it deeper into the building causing internal damp problems and the potential for damage to the fabric through the transfer of soluble salts from the cement itself.

**5.8** Unrendered buildings should not typically be rendered for purely aesthetic reasons. Instead render should be applied only where there would be a technical advantage to doing so and when this is necessary materials must be compatible with the construction of the building. For historic buildings this invariably means using lime based materials.

## 6 Joinery

**6.1** Historic joinery can add significantly to the character of an area and the extent of its survival is typically representative of the proportion of Listed Buildings in an area, but is also dependent upon the value that people place on the historic value of their village. Like most places Westleigh has retained a degree of historic joinery which sits alongside sensitive replacements as well as unsympathetic, poorly detailed modern joinery.

**6.2** At present the replacement of windows and doors is not controlled on unlisted buildings in use as private dwelling houses. Buildings in other uses, including apartments and retail premises require planning permission for alteration and replacement of windows and doors. North Devon Council will consider Article 4(2) directions to prevent harmful alterations to dwelling houses in the future. It is always preferable for owners to recognise that sensitive maintenance adds value to their own property and contributes to the sense of place.

**6.3** Historic joinery ought to be seen as antique furniture that changes hands as part of a larger deal and can easily be overlooked. It only takes one inconsiderate owner to destroy the historic appearance of a building by ill-considered renovation; with property changing hands as frequently as it does today there is a steady stream of buildings whose luck has run out. There are few people who would throw a 200 year old chair or table in a skip – their potential value is usually appreciated – yet it happens to windows and doors regularly. These artifacts are a finite resource that embodies the craftsmanship of earlier generations and records the materials and techniques they used.

**6.4** Unless badly neglected over a long period of time, traditional joinery is rarely beyond repair. In many cases the timber used was so well sourced and seasoned that it is far more durable than any modern alternative. If repair is not possible, replica replacement is the next best thing; though replacement requires the use of primary resources and energy that makes it a less sustainable option. The use of imported hardwood from unsustainable sources ought to be avoided and uPVC has significant ecological issues associated with its production process and later disposal. From a sustainability standpoint timber windows made from managed sources of timber are more environmentally sound than uPVC which does not decompose in landfill and produces chlorine based by-products and gases during manufacture.

**6.5** There is no product that is maintenance free. Timber needs painting every few years, but each time the result looks fresh and new. After a hundred years or more sash cords or hinges may need renewal; this is quite easily done and gives the unit a new lease of life. When modern opening mechanisms or double glazed units breakdown the answer is replacement of the whole unit – hence the piles of uPVC windows accumulating at recycling centres in the absence of satisfactory means of disposal.

## Windows

**6.6** The size, type and design of the windows in an historic building reveal much about its age or development, its use and the status of its occupants in the past. Humbler buildings often have casement windows that vary in design according to age, use and local custom. Sash windows also vary in size and detail according to age and use. The enduring popularity of sash windows reflects their versatility in providing controlled ventilation.

**6.7** Historic glass survives in some windows, particularly apparent in Ivy Cottage and Hill House, and should be retained where possible. However, installing modern glass that has been treated to give it the appearance of historic glass is not considered appropriate, and the visual effect is rarely convincing.

**6.8** When new windows are needed there are a number of issues to consider:

- Proportion and subdivision – The glazing pattern of the original windows ought to be retained, (or restored if lost), as that is a critical part of the whole building. It indicates the size of glass available or affordable at the time of construction.
- Mode of opening – The introduction of top hung or tilt-and-turn opening lights is always visually jarring and harmful to the historic character. Overlapping ‘storm-seal’ type details are an entirely modern introduction and are unnecessary if flush fitting units are properly made. Spring loaded sashes are an inferior replacement mechanism compared with properly weighted double-hung sashes.
- Glazing – Traditional glazing bar profiles, properly jointed and glazed with putty, (or glazing compound), rather than beading, will give a genuine appearance.
- Thermal insulation – Double glazing cannot be achieved within traditional multiple pane designs without bars being either much too thick or false. Beading is nearly always added which further detracts from the appearance. Attempting to introduce double glazing into a traditional design usually means a small air gap that hugely reduces the insulation properties anyway. The use of shutters and/or insulated curtains can greatly reduce heat loss without the need for window replacement.
- Draught-proofing – The majority of heat loss from historic windows is often through draughts caused by ill-fitting frames. Draft proofing systems are available that can be fitted to existing windows in situ and can be highly effective in reducing draughts and heat loss.
- Sound insulation – Cutting down noise is often given as a reason for replacing existing windows with double glazed units. However, tests have shown that secondary glazing is actually more effective at reducing transmitted noise. It is often less costly than fitting double glazed units and also allows for the historic windows to be retained.
- Sills – Traditional sills should be retained unless beyond repair, when they should be replaced with matching sills in terms of both materials and details.

## Doors

**6.9** Doors can add to the character of the streetscene in much the same way. It is worth remembering that a little time and money spent on periodic maintenance and painting can allow a good quality historic hardwood door to remain serviceable for many years.

**6.10** It should also be remembered that traditional timber doors may hold 'door furniture' such as knockers, knobs, letterboxes and hinges which are still serviceable even when the door itself has been allowed to decay beyond salvaging. If a replacement timber door is sourced these older pieces of door furniture can be re-used on the new door. By their nature uPVC doors come with letterboxes, hinges and handles ready fitted, often moulded as part of the unit and the sensitive, and sustainable, re-use of historic features is not possible.

**6.11** Where a door is accompanied by a doorcase or other associated architectural features it is often the case that the door was designed as part of the unit and replacement by a door of different design will detract from the appearance and character of the building as a whole. Even when not accompanied by doorcases the replacement of a well designed historic door with a standardised modern unit will be detrimental to the character of the building, and thus the wider streetscape.

## 7 Article 4(2) Directions

**7.1** Perhaps the greatest threat facing conservation areas in the UK is development not controlled by the planning system. The majority of these ‘permitted developments’ affect private dwelling houses and allow for minor works to be carried out without the need to apply for planning permission.

**7.2** These rights were granted by the ‘Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995’ (as amended October 2008) and cover activities such as changing windows and doors, erecting satellite dishes and, most recently, some installations of on-site renewable energy generation equipment.

**7.3** As well as granting these various rights of development, the order also provided opportunities for revoking them under certain circumstances, primarily within architecturally, or historically, sensitive areas. The section of the order dealing with repealing permitted development rights is Article 4. For a direction to be enacted under this article certain conditions must be met.

**7.4** For example if the local authority wanted to prevent homeowners in an area from replacing windows without planning permission that area would have to contain some surviving historic windows that would be protected by the measure. Equally the area would have to contain some inappropriate modern replacement windows – as this demonstrates that there is a threat from inappropriate works being carried out.

**7.5** Article 4 directions do not remove all permitted development rights, rather they are targeted at specific forms of permitted development and the developments they target must be justified.

**7.6** The possibility of utilising Article 4(2) directions within Westleigh will be investigated as a result of this management plan, and if considered appropriate and practical may be implemented within the conservation area. Community consultation would precede any adoption of such a scheme.

**7.7** It should also be noted that if a planning application is required exclusively as a result of an Article 4(2) direction then no application fee will be applicable.

**8 Action Plan**

<b>Management Aim</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Agencies</b>
Use the character appraisal & management plan as material considerations in determining planning applications within and adjoining the Westleigh Conservation Area.		
Investigate the options and practicalities of Article 4(2) directions to control unsympathetic alterations.		
Implementation of the above if considered practical and appropriate.		
Use the Character Appraisal to influence the architectural character and built form of any new development.		