

BRAILES
VILLAGE
DESIGN STATEMENT



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*Adopted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council as
Supplementary Planning Guidance November 1998*

*Prepared by the residents of Brailes with financial support from Rural Action for the Environment
and Brailes Parish Council*



BRAILES VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This *Village Design Statement* refers to the natural and man-made characteristics that make Brailes distinctive.

However Brailes possesses a less tangible, but powerfully significant characteristic, which has been emphasised by many residents in their contributions to this document – namely, a vibrant community spirit which is quite special. The variety of age groups, types of houses and employment opportunities all contribute to this community resonance, which the information in this document hopes to promote.

This *Village Design Statement* describes the character of Brailes, highlighting the qualities and features that are highly valued by the residents. It has been written by members of the community following the opportunity for all residents to contribute their views through a questionnaire, two community workshops, two exhibitions and via a draft document.

Aim

The aim of this *Village Design Statement* is to guide and influence change in a way that respects and preserves the character and distinctiveness of the village. The views of the community expressed in this Statement will become part of planning procedure.



LOCATION

Brailes (Upper and Lower) is an attractive village surrounded by hills at the southern extremity of Warwickshire, bordering Oxfordshire to the east. Located 4 miles east of Shipston-on-Stour on the B4035 Shipston to Banbury road, the village lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

POPULATION

At the last census the population of the Parish of Brailes (including the hamlet of Winderton) was 1046, living in 404 households. 23% were under 18 and 23% were over 65. Over half the community had lived here for at least 10 years and many had lived in the village all their lives. A significant number of the working population worked at or from their homes emphasising Brailes' role as a working rather than just a dormitory village.

HISTORY

Brailes, or Brayles as it is spelt in early documents, derives its name from the Saxon word for wood. It is bounded in the south-east by a pre-historic track, a Jurassic Way known as Ditchedge Lane. Part of the north boundary is a Roman road. It is believed that the village was a Roman spa with a settlement to the north of St. George's Church featuring Sutton Brook and the Ninety Nine Steps. An old salt road, now known as Saltway Lane, provided Brailes with one of its earliest links to the outside 'kingdome'. It ran north-east to Winderton, and thence across country to the Roman Fosse Way. In 1070 Brailes yielded 20 pack horses of salt annually to the King.

In the Domesday Survey (1085) it is described as the 'Manor of Brayles', having 145 households and 5,520 acres. It was important enough to warrant a defence outpost, a motte and bailey castle erected by Henry de Newburgh on what is now known as Castle Hill. By the 13th Century it had become 'The Royal Manor of Brayles', i.e. owned by the King, and an important trading post. It was granted licenses for a market and for a fair. The agricultural prosperity of the area contributed to the enlarging of the magnificent Parish Church of St. George, the Cathedral of the Feldon, between 1325 and 1375. It speaks for the tolerance of the community that both Protestants and Catholics existed with each other and survived the fluctuations of religious persecution in the 15th and 16th Centuries.

In 1540 the Sheldon family became the owners of the Manor of Brailes (a family link that was to remain unbroken for more than 300 years); by then the population was over 2,000, making it the third largest town in the county, after Warwick and Coventry.

In the 18th and 19th centuries Brailes developed from an agricultural and trading background to include small manufacturing industries. Brick works, iron forges, brewing, sawmills and a plush mill flourished. The seats of the first London horse-drawn omnibuses were covered in Brailes plush.

Agriculture is still important to the village economy, but with mechanisation fewer work on the land and people have to travel further afield for work. There has also been an increase in people working from home or developing their own business. Manufacturing has been sustained with a small industrial estate at the eastern end of the village.

Brailes today still enjoys a wooded landscape with many copses and spinneys. It is a working village of about 1,000 people. It has seven shops, and a busy social calendar with many organisations and clubs. The thriving annual village show which began with the 'Wings for Victory Appeal' in 1943 now attracts over 2,000 visitors.

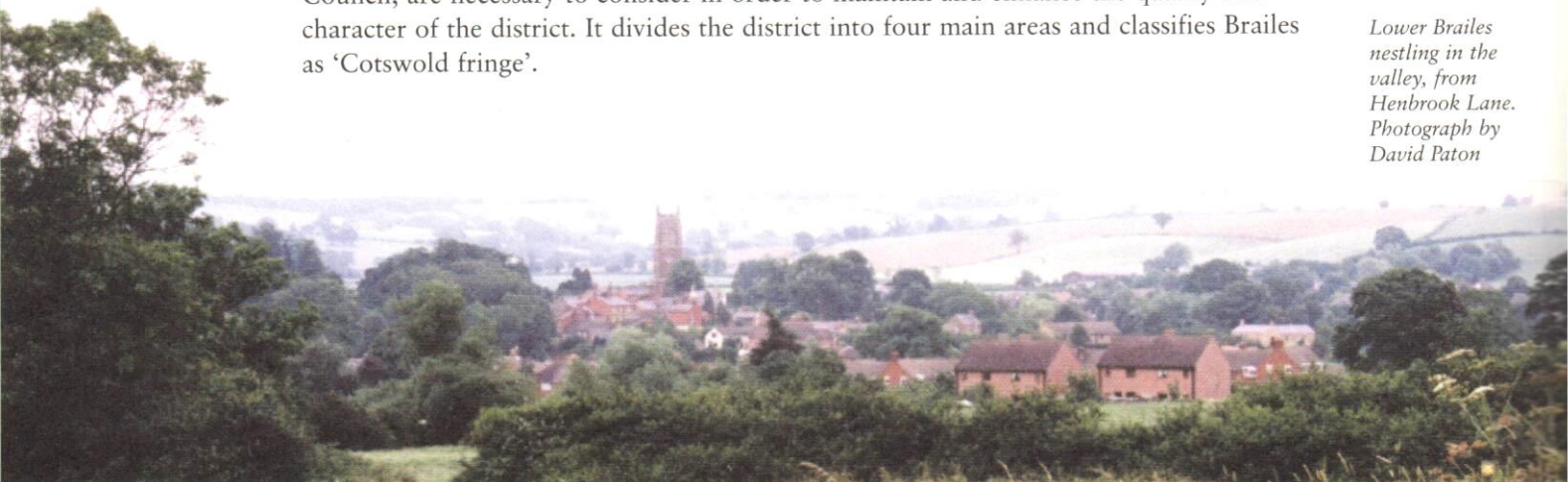
LANDSCAPE SETTING

Character and Design in Stratford-on-Avon District – A Countryside Design Summary

(Stratford-on-Avon District Council 1998)

This summary sets out some of the issues relevant to design that, in the view of the Council, are necessary to consider in order to maintain and enhance the quality and character of the district. It divides the district into four main areas and classifies Brailes as 'Cotswold fringe'.

*Lower Brailes
nestling in the
valley, from
Henbrook Lane.
Photograph by
David Paton*



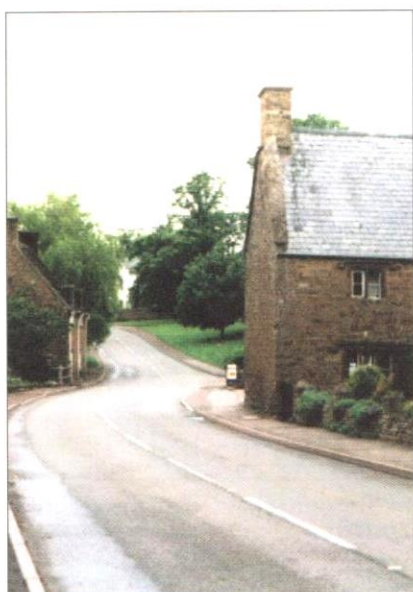
Lower Brailes is scarp foot and slope typified by underlying Lower Lias clay and Middle Lias silt with unimproved grassland, scrub and wood on steep valley sides. The foot of the scarp has a medium to large scale geometric field pattern with pockets of permanent grassland often with well preserved ridge and furrow. The wide roadside verges are bounded by thick hedges and ditches.

Upper Brailes is fringe downland of underlying Lower Lias clay, Middle Lias silt, Marlstone, Upper Lias clay, capped by Inferior Oolitic limestone and boulder clay. The field pattern is similar to Lower Brailes with the richer red soil supporting productive arable farmland with some woodland on higher ground.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines

(Warwickshire County Council/Countryside Commission 1993)



Pinchpoint near the garage

This is a comprehensive assessment of the Warwickshire landscape to describe the character and features of different landscapes within the county. Based upon this a series of management strategies and landscape guidelines have been developed to show how and where landscape character needs to be conserved, restored or enhanced. General development guidelines are included. The document is for reference purposes and although it has no statutory planning status (at present) it is useful in guiding landscape related issues in helping to maintain local character.

In this document, Brailes is again included in the 'Cotswold fringe' – *“a varied undulating agricultural landscape often on the fringe of more steeply rising ground”*.



View from the road near the Village Hall, looking towards Brailes Hill

Relief and Approaches

The village harmonises naturally into the landscape, astride the main road which follows natural contours.

Lower and Upper Brailes lie on an elevation of between

200 and 475 feet. The village is dominated by hills. Gallows Hill at the eastern approach to the village is 680 feet and Mine Hill, directly to the south, rises to 635 feet. Brailes Hill, at the south-western end of the village reaches 760 feet and is crowned by Highwall Spinney, a feature which is easily recognised from afar. Castle Hill watches over the top end of the village while Winderton Hill away to the north-east casts its gaze over the whole of Upper and Lower Brailes.

The two main approaches are from east and west; Holloway Hill to the east is steep and heavily wooded and Fant Hill to the west descends quickly on to the agricultural plain towards Shipston-on-Stour. The exits to the north and south are narrow tree-lined lanes with wide verges, quickly moving into quiet farming country.

A Recent Addition

Brailes Golf Club has an 18 hole course recently laid out on former arable land. It lies on the village outskirts towards Sutton-under-Brailes in the south. The course was environmentally designed to encourage wild life conservation and blends in quite well.

Water

The surrounding higher ground contains many natural springs supplying wells in the village. Sutton Brook dissects the village below Jeffs Close, and that area is prone to flooding. A Conservation Pond was created at the corner of Henbrook Lane for the benefit of the pupils at the school nearby. There are several other old ponds in the village including two former brickyards.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Brailes fits comfortably into the significant natural features creating a sense of balance and harmony. Any extension of the existing built edge boundaries must not disturb this.

Care should be taken to ensure that the extent and silhouette of the village is not changed so that it affects the landscape detrimentally, nor should changes such as infill and backland development be allowed to adversely change the overall impression of the surrounding countryside.

The clear lines of the hills must be preserved by preventing any further intrusions of buildings, aerals or other construction along their lines.

Local hydrology patterns, waterways and their natural surroundings should be respected and considered in the design of new development. The conservation and management of existing water features should be encouraged.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Highways and Footpaths

Brailes probably owes much of its development to the winding main road which undulates through the village for 1½ miles. A special feature of Brailes is the number of fields and open spaces which still abut this road, giving uninterrupted views into the surrounding countryside. The village is largely linear along the B4035, with short, mostly unadopted side roads leading

away to open country on either side. Footway lighting is varied but not always sympathetic. Parking spaces for motors on the road are scarce throughout the village.

There are 25 miles of public footpaths which are well kept and marked with stiles and dog-ways. They link homes, village amenities, open spaces and the countryside beyond. They are well used and are a very important and valued feature of the village and its daily life.



Upper Brailes from Castle Hill, showing settlement pattern



New stile and dog-way by Castle Hill

Housing

The Conservation Area encompasses the original centre of the village, with a concentration of buildings clustered around the Church and the George Hotel. The older buildings are mainly terraces or houses and farms scattered along the whole length of the main road. Development in the last 50 years has almost doubled the number of houses in Brailes, and many of the orchards and copses which formerly divided properties have been built upon. The fields which do still remain between the developed areas, especially those dividing Upper and Lower Brailes, are much valued by residents. Pockets of new development have included some social housing, laid out in small estates, but these are not intrusive on the older pattern of the village. There is now a good mix of houses by size and style but the strength of the housing market puts affordable property for young people in short supply and this could adversely affect the balance of population.

Amenities and Employment

The village is well served with amenities although almost all of them are in Lower Brailes. There are two inns, two general stores (one with a Post Office), a florist, butcher, newsagent, hairdresser, interior designer, garage and filling station, funeral director and numerous self-employed craftsmen and artisans. There are three places of worship – the Parish Church, Methodist Chapel and a unique Roman Catholic Chapel. Several places are available for public meetings including the Village Hall. There is a Primary School with about 90 pupils, a playing field with pavilion, and an 18 hole golf course.

Brailes is a living village with employment opportunities, including many people working from home. There are still three working farms in the village itself and several more within the Parish boundary. The small industrial estate on the Winderton road, with its many small businesses, blends in well.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Off-street parking should be fully considered within the design of new buildings and, where appropriate, located at the rear of the property.

Recycled tarmac, which is environmentally friendly and less costly, is preferable for roads and pavements in a rural area.

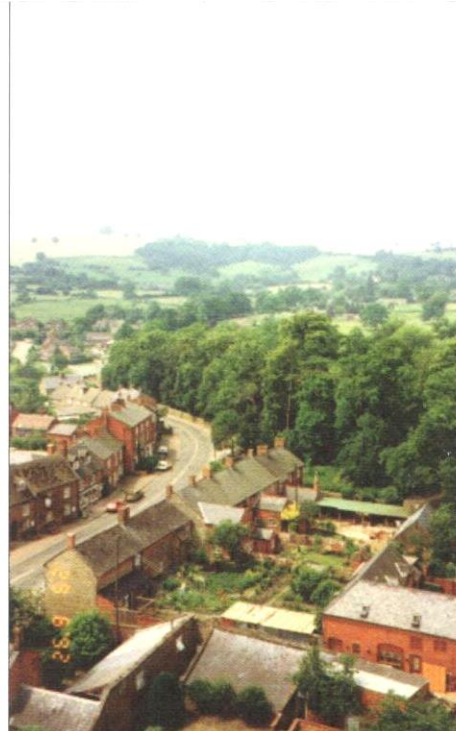
Expansion of businesses on the industrial estate should be tailored to local employment needs but should not be intrusive.

Housing development in the village should encourage low-cost housing for local people, and property to rent.

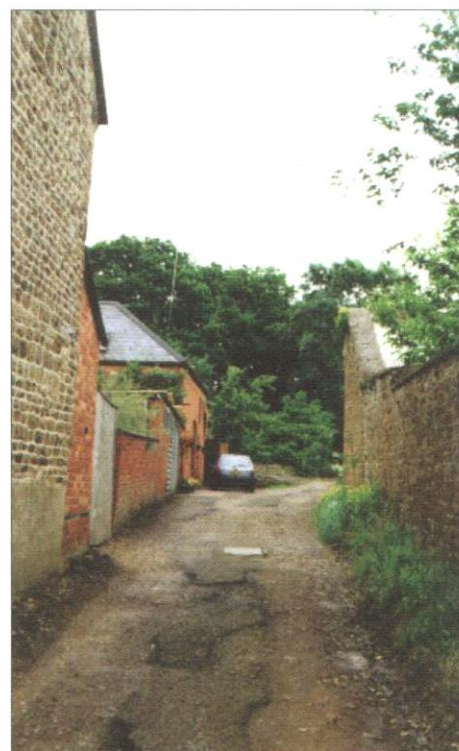
The re-development of disused buildings and brownfield sites should take priority over plans to build on greenfield sites.

Any new building project should follow the existing settlement patterns incorporating, where appropriate, its own open space.

Urban standards of lighting are unnecessary and should not be adopted.



Roofscape and settlement pattern from the Church tower towards Brailes Hill



Butchers Lane, an unadopted side road off the main road



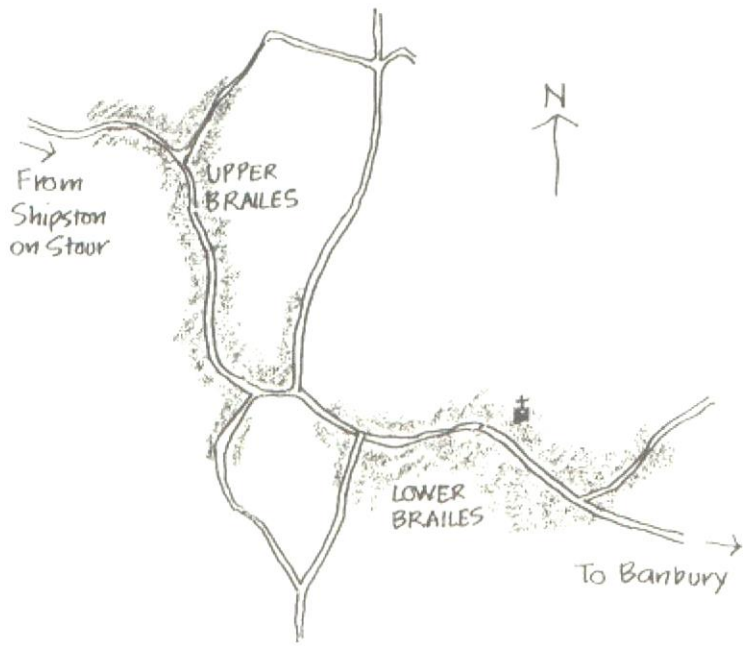
Upper Brailes

- 1 *Castle Hill Lane*
- 2 *Main Road*
- 3 *Henbrook Lane*
- 4 *Gilletts Lane*
- 5 *Hill Lane*
- 6 *Castle Hill*

Lower Brailes

- 7 *High Street*
- 8 *Cow Lane*
- 9 *Rectory Lane*
- 10 *Friars Lane*
- 11 *Butchers Lane*
- 12 *School Lane*
- 13 *Orchard Close*
- 14 *Jeffs Close*
- 15 *Blew Gates*
- 16 *Sutton Lane*
- 17 *Castle Hill Lane*

 *Significant views and open spaces*



Aerial photographs Copyright Stratford-on-Avon District Council



OPEN SPACES AND BOUNDARIES

Decorative and Nature Conservation Areas

The village is fortunate in having a number of greens and open spaces which are much enjoyed. The Upper and Lower village greens are dominated by maturing trees. Stocktree Hill has its own distinctive open patch in front of the Parish Church which accommodates the handsome War Memorial. Henbrook Pond provides a formal nature conservation area.



The Green with maturing trees

Functional Areas

In addition to the privately owned agricultural land which occupies valued open spaces within the village there are two areas which provide public amenities. The playing field is used for cricket, football, caravan rallies, the Church Fete, Brailes Show and the annual bonfire. It also has a childrens' play area adjacent to the school. The large allotment area in Upper Brailes on the slopes of Castle Hill is a very important facility. It is well cared for, producing impressive crops of vegetables and flowers.

Trees

Brailes is blessed with a fine crop of mature and stately trees and there are plenty of smaller ones too. The effects of Dutch Elm disease are still felt. There are some sizeable oak trees of note in Plum Tree paddock and the School Playground. There are numerous spinneys and small woods which are a delightful asset to the village. These include Highwall Spinney, Jenny Swift Plantation, Stockwell Spinney, Ashen Copse, Holloway Hill, Castle Hill Lane and the Brailes House rookery. Hedgerows typically contain hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, ash and oak.

Boundaries

Many properties are bounded by traditional dry stone walls, brick walls or original field hedges which are well maintained and treasured. There is also an 18th century Grade II listed crinkle crackle brick wall around the former kitchen garden of Brailes House.

Views

There are impressive views almost everywhere in the village, both looking out and looking in. These views are a unique and treasured aspect of the village. Many properties have striking rural views of their own which are also highly valued by their occupants.

Looking Into the Village:

- Approaching Brailes from Banbury there is a magnificent panoramic view of the village from Holloway Hill.
- From Cow Lane one looks across the paddock with its mature oak tree towards the Parish Church.
- From Henbrook Lane again the Parish Church is seen nestling in the valley with Mine Hill beyond.
- Castle Hill, Mine Hill and Brailes Hill all provide wonderful views into the village and public footpaths give easy access to many lesser vantage points.

Looking Out of the Village:

- The three hills provide the major focus when looking out of the village from the many open spaces such as the Lower Green, the field next to Atten's Byre and the Allotments. They also provide extensive views beyond to the Malverns, Broadway Tower and the windmill at Tysoe.



Old dry stone wall around the Vicarage

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The retention of valued open spaces, as identified, is essential to the overall character and feel of the village.

The preservation and maintenance of the existing trees and spinneys is very important.

New trees planted and landscape design associated with new development, should promote the use of species that are native or distinctive to South Warwickshire. Following new planting, landscape and planning conditions should be actively enforced.

The views into and out of the village identified in this document and on the aerial photographs, should be considered as significant to the overall character of Brailes and therefore both preserved and respected in the design of new development.



Henbrook Pond



Castle Hill

LANDMARKS

Natural Features

The hills, which have already been described are the dominating physical features, with Highwall Spinney, on top of Brailes Hill, visible for miles around. The unique nature of Castle Hill is officially recognised by its designation by English Heritage as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It is also a locally important ecological site. The extensive ridge and furrow fields throughout the parish are evidence of earlier settlements and the agricultural heritage. Trees are an important natural physical feature, Highwall Spinney and Brailes House Rookery are particularly striking. The soil is alkaline, overlying heavy clay, with several deposits of Northants sand.



St. George's Church

BUILDINGS

Brailes Conservation Area document describes 18 listed buildings in Lower Brailes, and mentions a further 16 in Upper Brailes. Many of the listed buildings are ironstone cottages or the small houses of yeoman farmers dating from the 17th century.

The magnificent 120 foot Perpendicular tower of the Grade 1 Listed St. George's Church, with its four pinnacles, is an easily distinguished landmark. It houses the second heaviest peal of 6 bells in the world. They are in regular use with local bell ringers, and a carillon plays hymn tunes automatically 8 times a day.

Other public buildings of note in Lower Brailes that are visible from the main road include the Old School in School Lane, the Institute on Friar's Lane, and the George Hotel and Post Office, both dating from the 16th century.

In Upper Brailes the brick Methodist Chapel can be seen clearly across the Upper Green and the Gate Inn is at the side of the main road.



The George Hotel

Form

Over the centuries buildings have been completed in many different styles and this variety is a distinctive characteristic of the village. Brailes retains the building relics of several small family businesses which have ceased. These include several breweries, forges, post offices, glaziers, painters, cobblers, saddlers, bakers, wheelwrights, farms, and schools – many of which have been converted to residential use.

Houses are predominantly two storey, but with some 3 storey. There are some terraces, both long and short as well as semi-detached and detached houses. They are basically rectangular with pitched roofs and the older buildings have mainly flat frontages of simple design. Single storey dwellings appeared in the last 30 years.

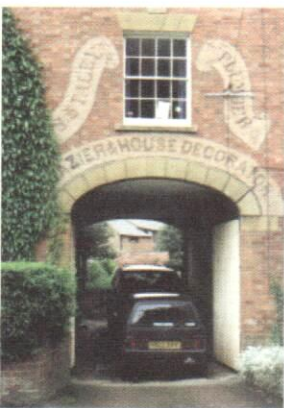
Layout

Entering the village from the west the buildings are mostly small-scale 19th and 20th century houses and bungalows fronting onto the main road behind walled or fenced small gardens. Further down the road, an estate of ex-council houses, Jeffs Close, has been built to the south on land between Sutton brook and Sutton Lane. The Park, the last turning off the main road before Holloway Hill, includes amongst older buildings a small estate of houses and bungalows built by the Council post 1950. Their traditional construction is quite well absorbed and it is only the relatively shallow pitched roofs of the bungalows, and two painted cottages at the junction with Saltway Lane, that catch the eye.

Quite a large number of properties front directly onto the pavement, or have very small front gardens. Back gardens are larger. Parking is a great problem with many houses having no parking area on site.

Materials

The general character of building is based on the use of ironstone. This Marlstone weathers with exposure to become a soft rusty-looking stone which only allows production of coarse detail compared to the finer oolitic limestone found further south in the Cotswolds. Many of the listed buildings are built of this. By the beginning of the last century Brailes Brick became the predominant building material for walls and Welsh slate for roofing.



Typical flat arch and mixture of materials. Advertisement for former business



Contrasting materials



Mixture of periods, styles, and materials in Upper Brailes

Variety is again a characteristic, both of type of material and the way it is used. Some buildings are all stone or all brick, but a mixture of stone with brick quoins and window surrounds, or brick with stone quoins and lintels is common. There are also stone cottages with brick extensions and ones where stone cottages are fronted with brick. Many buildings originally had thatched roofs, often with parapeted gables. Where thatch has been removed on stone buildings, brick courses have sometimes been added to change the roof pitch. Stone slates were rarely used, but the church and Old Rectory Farm are surviving examples. Some of the early ironstone cottages have stone mullion windows with label moulds and iron casements but surviving windows are more commonly of painted timber with small frames.

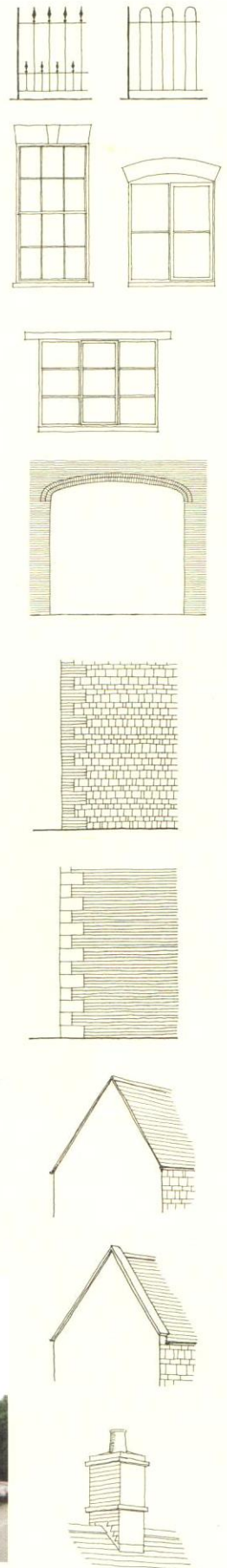


Brick is now often used for building, but much more attention should be given to the actual choice of brick. In recent times some new buildings have forsaken brick in favour of reconstituted or synthetic stone but this has not blended well.

Former brewery dominating this scene in Upper Brailes

Characteristic Details ►

These are found in older properties throughout Brailes, but with a greater concentration in the Conservation Area.



DESIGN GUIDELINES

The scale and proportion of new buildings and extensions should harmonise with neighbouring properties and spaces. Plans should be accompanied by a perspective drawing showing this relationship.

Small is beautiful. New developments should be of a scale in keeping with the rest of the village.

Extensions can often be of more visual interest if they are designed to be set slightly back/forward to the original. A variation in roof pitch can provide diversity and a less unified roofscape. This characteristic can be observed in many of the existing street scenes in Brailes.

The characteristic mix of building materials should be maintained, matching brickwork or stone with the buildings around. Re-constituted stone should be avoided. When brick is used it should harmonise with Brailes brick.

Gables with old slates, plain tiles or thatch are preferable to hipped roofs.

To retain rural character, consideration should be given to the use of broken stone or other appropriate local colour/textured material on entrances and other larger surfaces.

Local characteristic details are to be encouraged as shown in the illustrations.

When renewing utilities underground routing is preferred in order to reduce the number of poles and overhead lines.



Varied roof lines and periods in the middle of the Conservation Area

FLORA, FAUNA, AND VEGETATION

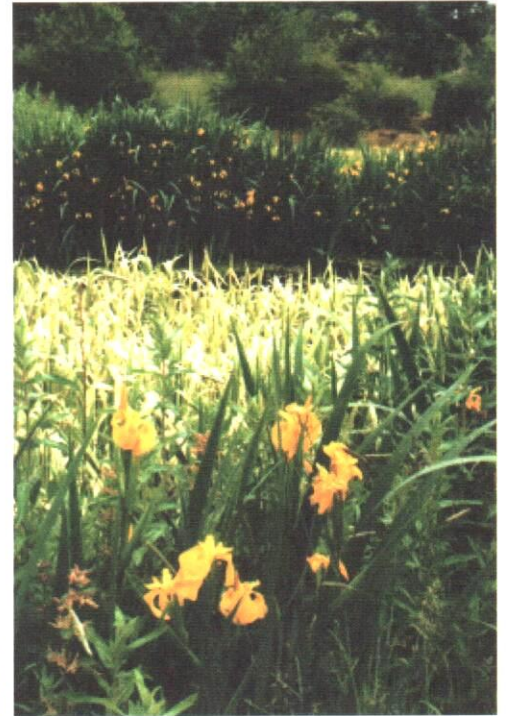
The surrounding countryside is studded with small woods and copses, with primroses and bluebells plentiful in many sites. The trees are mainly deciduous, including ash, oak, willow, sycamores and horse chestnut.

Hedgerows have largely survived the adoption of modern farming methods. Surrounding fields in the main are of a small size, bounded with fine multi-specied hedges. Roads and lanes are often tree-lined with generous verges containing a profusion of wild flowers and plants.

The unspoiled nature of the countryside supports a large variety of mammals and it is home to many indigenous and migrant birds. The woods provide home to roe, fallow and muntjac deer with foxes and badgers very common too. Village gardens record up to 40 species of birds; herons and raptors are common on the outskirts.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The diversity and abundance of natural history is a vital ingredient of the environment and its protection and conservation should be respected.



Henbrook Pond nature conservation area

Old hedge and dry stone wall, looking towards the Upper Green with its mature trees

DESIGN AND A SENSE OF PLACE

A sense of place is made up of all the elements already described in this statement, which are inter-related and influence each other. Geology influences landscape. Landscape and evolution determine location and settlement pattern. Settlement pattern and history influence the type, size and design of buildings based on population demands. The buildings already present influence the population mix, which contributes to the tone of this lively working village.

It is important that the gradual evolution of the village continues, and that it does not stagnate or die. One contribution that we can make towards this is the provision of housing that is affordable to youngsters, either to buy or to rent. The support of the South Warwickshire Housing Association would be helpful in bringing this about. By encouraging local young people to stay in the village we safeguard the future of the school and continue the 'vibrant community spirit' so much appreciated by residents.

MAKING IT WORK

This Statement takes account of policies in the Stratford-on-Avon District Local Plan which reflect government advice from the range of planning and policy guidance documents. Part of Brailes is designated as a Conservation Area by Stratford-on-Avon District Council. In particular this statement provides detail to supplement the Stratford-on-Avon District Countryside Design Summary and the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines.

The Statement has been adopted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It is applicable to all involved in the planning process and can also raise awareness with regards to smaller cumulative changes that can often erode local distinctiveness. This does not mean preserving in aspic, but managing evolutionary changes to maintain and reflect local identity and character. This statement is for the use of residents, businesses, architects, builders, planning departments and those elected to approve applications at local and regional level. We seek to raise everyone's awareness so that we retain the distinctive characteristics of Brailes.

FOOTNOTE

Winderton (the hamlet also part of the Parish of Brailes) has not been included in this Village Design Statement as a Conservation Area Review relating to Winderton is currently in progress. Many of the Design Guidelines mentioned in this document could apply equally to Winderton.

FURTHER REFERENCES

Character and Design in Stratford-on-Avon District – A Countryside Design Summary
Stratford-on-Avon District Council 1998, *Supplementary Planning Guidance*

Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines
Warwickshire County Council/Countryside Commission 1993

Cotswold AONB Management Strategy
Cotswold AONB Joint Advisory Committee 1996

Brailes Conservation Area
Stratford-on-Avon District Council 1993

Brailes and Winderton Village Appraisal 1992/93

Living and Working in a Conservation Area
Stratford-on-Avon District Council 1997

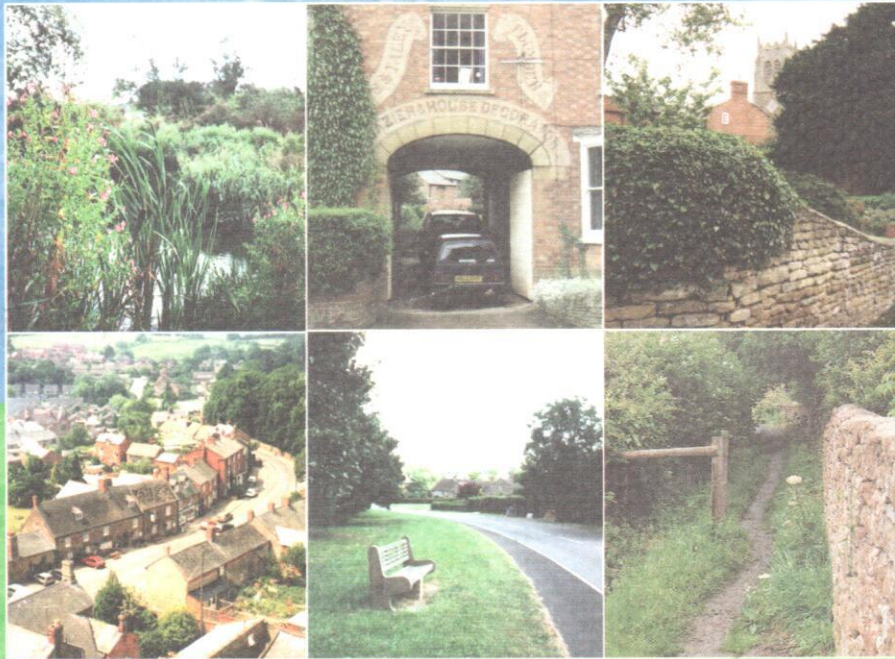
Landscape Design
Stratford-on-Avon District Council 1998



A mature oak tree and the Church from Cow Lane

Thanks are due to

- The villagers of Brailes who took part in workshops and meetings, and contributed their expertise in a variety of ways.
- Andrew Wharton, VDS Project Officer at Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
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