



Little Leigh

Village Design Statement

September 2013

(Adopted 12 December 2013)

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Little Leigh parish

Frodsham

Barnton

Weaverham

Northwich

Cheshire West
and Chester

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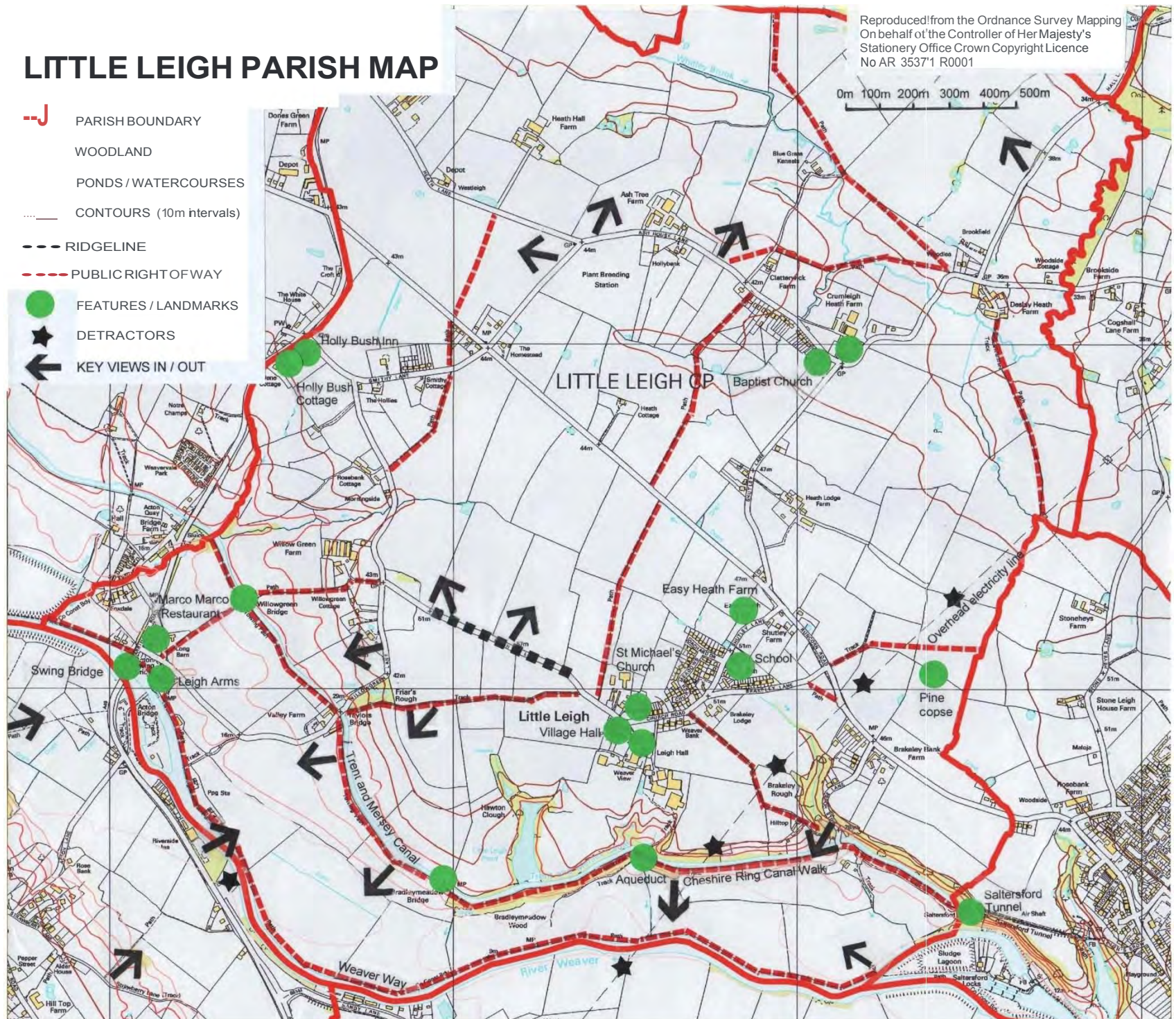


Little Leigh parish



LITTLE LEIGH PARISH MAP

- - J PARISH BOUNDARY
- WOODLAND
- PONDS / WATERCOURSES
- CONTOURS (10m intervals)
- - - RIDGELINE
- - - PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY
- FEATURES / LANDMARKS
- ★ DETRACTORS
- ← KEY VIEWS IN / OUT



1 Introduction

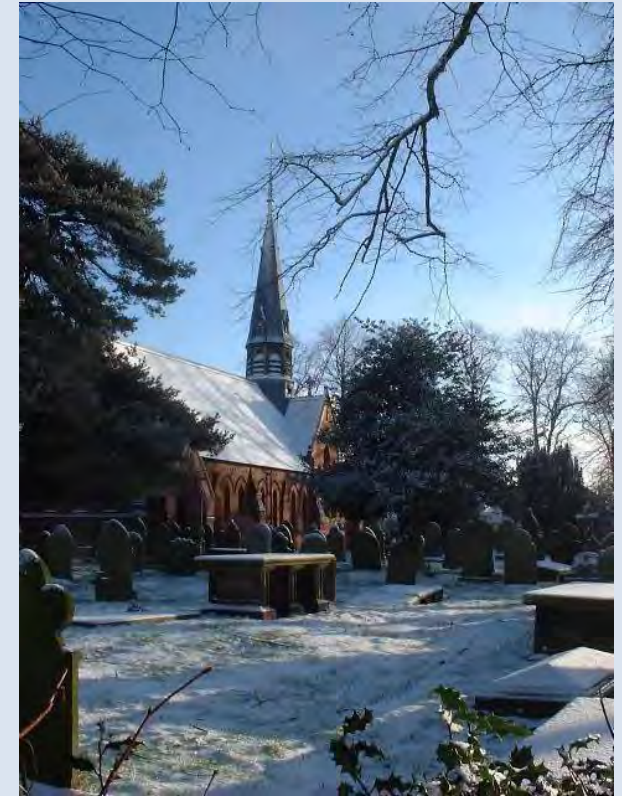
1.1 Location of Little Leigh

Little Leigh Parish is a diverse rural community of 6.4 square kilometres with a population of approximately 550 occupying some 250 dwellings within the North Cheshire green belt. It is located to the north of the River Weaver, four miles from Northwich and is bisected by the A533 Runcorn Road. It is bounded by the A49 Warrington Road to the west, extending eastwards almost to Barnton and the parish of Whitley to the north.

Little Leigh has a village centre south of Runcorn Road which includes St Michael and All Angels Church, the Village Hall, the Primary School and a modern housing estate. The parish comprises a substantial area of farmland and incorporates scattered farms and cottages with several clusters of ribbon development with a variety of different styles and materials.

1.2 What is a Village Design Statement?

- It is a document produced by the village community.
- It sets out the visual character of the village from the viewpoint of its inhabitants.
- It describes the form and features that define Little Leigh within its unique landscape setting.
- It contains information on the views and desires of the community that can inform the design decisions of architects and developers.
- It is a document that can manage future changes in both the landscape and buildings whether large or small in a way that reflects the local character of the village's buildings, spaces and the landscape setting.
- It will aid planning policies and decisions in matters local to Little Leigh.
- It is not concerned with whether development should take place; this is the job of the Local Plan / Local Development Framework.





1.3 How the Village Design Statement will be used

- By residents, as guidance for planning extensions or buildings and to ensure harmony with the local character.
- By planning officials, who should use it as additional guidance in decisions affecting Little Leigh.
- By architects, developers and designers as a consultation document to inform development in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of Little Leigh residents.

1.4 What is the Little Leigh Village Design Statement?

The Little Leigh Village Design Statement has been written by residents of the village, assisted by the Cheshire Landscape Trust and Cheshire West and Chester staff, following research and consultation with local residents, groups and businesses over several years. Grateful thanks are due to everyone involved. It incorporates the Parish Landscape Statement (PLS). The document aims to give clear and simple guidance on design and environmental issues to anyone who wants to build, modify or extend property in the village so that:

- developments are appropriate to their setting
- high standards are achieved in design and the use of materials
- the distinctive character of the village is maintained and, where possible, enhanced

The Village Design Statement is relevant to architects, developers and builders, householders and statutory bodies. It should also be applied when proposing alterations to property which would not normally require formal planning consent. For small alterations it advises on modifications to, for example, boundaries (walls, fences and hedges), open spaces and footpaths, to enhance the character of the village.

The Design Statement is not intended to limit architects and designers to reproducing the past. Modern, well designed and sustainable building should not be precluded. It is not intended to stop development and change from taking place, and it does not advise on individual sites in the village, but it should be used to inform and influence development.



1.5 What's in the Little Leigh Village Design Statement?

Section 2 outlines the legal status of the Village Design Statement.

Sections 3, 4, and 5 describe the village and the features which give it its distinctive character.

Sections 6 and 7 provide guidelines for future developments, including small-scale domestic alterations or larger-scale new developments.

Village aspirations that are not covered by planning policy are shown separately in coloured boxes.

The Appendices provide background and supporting information, plans and diagrams.

1.6 Relationship to the Little Leigh Parish Plan

Little Leigh completed a Parish Plan in 2005 following extensive consultation. It is due for updating. It covers the vision of Little Leigh residents for the short and long term future of the village. This document covers leisure and social activities, facilities for young people, environment, services and communication. (A copy can be seen on www.littleleigh.net). The Village Design Statement deals with the character of the village setting, settlement pattern, buildings and spaces, highways and traffic.





2 The Planning Background

2.1 The Village Design Statement and Local Planning Policies

The Village Design Statement is intended to form a separate Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for use and adoption by Cheshire West and Chester Council. It will form part of a suite of Local Development Documents (LDD) that make up the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Vale Royal Local Plan (2006) is a saved plan. As such the SPD has been drawn up by the local community to expand on the policies listed in Appendix 1. It will be subject to formal consultation with members of the public, statutory consultants and other interested groups and organizations. This will be in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). After revisions to this draft, in light of any comments received, it will be included as a document in the Local Development Scheme and monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

Guidance and advice, and details of how to make planning applications, can be found on the Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) website (www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk). The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for CWAC also highlights how the community will be consulted on planning applications and on the preparation of other Local Development Framework documents.

More detail about the status of this Village Design Statement and its links into the local planning framework are given in Appendix 1. Wherever the Statement refers to matters covered by specific local planning policies brief reference to that policy is quoted, for example "BE1". A full list of all these policy references in Appendix 1.

Cheshire West and Chester Council are currently working towards the production of a new Local Plan for the whole borough. This will initially replace some of the policies within The Vale Royal Local Plan (2006), with the intent that the remaining policies will be replaced at a later date. It is anticipated that the VDS will align with the new Local Plan, once adopted. A review will be undertaken at the appropriate time.

3 Little Leigh History

3.1 Location

Little Leigh is a small village located on high ground in the Cheshire Plain between Northwich and Warrington. It lies to the north of the Weaver Navigation, an important waterway in the development of the area's salt industry. The western boundary of Little Leigh is formed by the A49, a former coaching route, which linked Warrington and Tarporley bridging the Weaver at Acton Bridge where there has been a crossing since medieval times.





3.2 Early History

The discovery of the burnt stump of a post some 5 foot deep in adjacent Bartington would suggest that Little Leigh was settled in prehistoric times. It featured in the Domesday Book in 1086AD as the “township of Little-Legh” held by William Fitz-Nigel, Baron of Halton, with a population of 9 families. Leigh derives from the Old English for wood or clearing and Legh or ley is the Anglo Saxon word for pasture. Over the next 500 years more land was used to grow cereals and the population grew with increased production. A significant scatter of Romano British artifacts have been found in the Willow Green area, mainly brooches and coins dating from the 1st to 3rd centuries.

3.3 Housing

In 1841 the village had a population of 387 inhabitants living in 67 households. In 1918 Lord Leigh, the landowner, sold off the entire village of agricultural holdings, small holdings, cottages and two licensed inns, adding up to 1200 acres. The village grew significantly during the 20th century to the present 550 inhabitants living in 250 households. The pattern of housing is, in the



main, ribbon developments along the roads and lanes. During the 1930s and 1950s council houses were built to accommodate families working on the land. In the 1970s and 1980s a small estate of owner-occupier houses was developed (St Michael's Close, Orchard Drive and Church Meadows) on land near the school. Since then, as the village lies in the green belt, residential development has been limited to in-filling, barn conversions and house extensions.

3.4 Farming

In 1738 80% of Little Leigh was purchased by the Leigh family of Stoneleigh Abbey Warwickshire. In the 18th Century as agriculture progressed, major landowners and owners of large farms were appointed "Overseers of the Poor" to provide financial support and lodgings to the labourers and poor of the parish. Farming as the main business activity in the village has continued to the present day but employs few people now. Crops include potatoes and cereals, which thrive on the sandy soil. There is some livestock farming but several farms have now diversified, providing grazing and stabling for horses. Dairy farming has virtually disappeared.

3.5 Businesses

The industrial revolution influenced the construction of the Trent and Mersey Canal completed in 1777, and the widening of the River Weaver to make it navigable. While industrial traffic passed on these waterways, life in the village was little affected. Up until the 1950s there was a constant flow of shipping carrying coal and steel along the Weaver Navigation to factories in Northwich. Salt and soda ash was carried outbound to Ellesmere Port and on to Liverpool where it was transhipped all over the world. Today's activity includes a boatyard and leisure moorings on the bank of the original river course. Commercial river traffic has all but ceased.

It was not until widespread car ownership in the latter part of the 20th century that the village became the home for significant numbers of people who did not work locally. The skills of the blacksmith and wheelwright were replaced with that of the car mechanic. Business activity in the village comprises a garage, a transport company, an electrical contractor, barn type units, a restaurant and two pubs. The internet has enabled some residents to work from home, the modern equivalent of the cottage industries of the past.





With most families having access to at least one car the shop, the post office and public transport have all been lost from the village.

3.6 Religion and Education

The established church has had a presence in the village since at least the 1600s. A “Chappel of Ease” was replaced by the current parish church of St Michael and All Angels in 1879. The Baptist church has been active in the village since the early 1800s. There has been a village schoolmaster since 1728 from a bequest by Ralph Horton. The Old School was built in 1841 and continued until the county primary school opened in the 1960s. Until the 1990s the school mainly served children from the village. However, because of its good academic record it now has a much wider catchment area and has expanded significantly, with the unintended consequence of road traffic congestion.



3.7 Social Activities

There have been public houses in the village since at least the mid 1700s. There was an inn called The Cock in the centre of the village until 1841, adjacent to where the village hall now stands. Other public houses, the Leigh Arms, the Horns and the Holly Bush, were situated near the coaching route which is now the A49. The Horns has been converted into an Italian restaurant. The Holly Bush was run by the same family for more than two centuries as part inn, part farmhouse. When the pub was developed in the 1990s its front room bar was preserved in its original state, after a local campaign. For many centuries the social life of the village revolved around the churches.

When the new school was built on Shutley Lane in the 1960s, the old school became the village hall and is the centre for a range of village activities but has little external open space. The play area adjacent to the school is a community open space and is being refurbished following village consultation



4 Geology and Landscape

4.1 Local Geology

In prehistoric times, the area surrounding the Weaver and Mersey valleys formed part of an inland sea. As the sea evaporated, salt deposits remained. During recurring glacial periods, glacial clay, sand and gravel were deposited over the underlying sandstone. Small lakes or meres formed as a result of subsidence in the salt fields.

The area is composed of two groups of Triassic rock, Sherwood sandstone and Mercia mudstone. These are found to the east of the sandstone-outcrop at Frodsham resulting in a flat low-lying landscape. The soil comprises glacio-fluvial deposits include Lower Keuper Marl, sand and gravel.

4.2 The Character of the Landscape Setting

The Cheshire Plain consists of rolling farmland on higher ground, which affords extensive views to the south and west towards the sandstone ridge and in good visibility, distant views eastwards towards the Pennines. There is a mixture of pasture and arable and the well drained sandy loam soils are important for potato growing. Although there is a significant area of pasture, there has been a noticeable decline in dairy farming in recent years. Although the woodland area is small, it appears to be well wooded owing to the number of hedgerow trees and small copses. Little Leigh is situated within the Mersey Forest, one of 12 national Community Forests.

Little Leigh has a number of distinctive landscape features including the River Weaver and the Trent and Mersey Canal. The River Weaver defines the southern boundary of the parish adjoining Weaverham and forms an attractive feature important for its wildlife and heritage. The views across the valley from the canal and other locations within the parish are particularly valued by the community and the key views are shown on Map 1.

Local residents have described the area as ‘a secret pocket of beautiful countryside’ and ‘Cheshire’s best kept secret’. The Weaver Valley is becoming increasingly important for recreation and tourism, and is traversed by the Weaver Way.





The Trent and Mersey Canal follows the valley side and is an important recreational route. It was designated a Conservation Area by Vale Royal Borough Council in 2000 and includes significant areas of adjacent woodland. There are a number of historic features along the canal including bridges, signs and an aqueduct, many of which are listed. The steep slopes bounding the canal to the east of the parish are clothed by mature broadleaved woodland and the area is designated as a Site of Biological Importance for its wildlife. The area includes Hawton Clough, Bradleymeadow Wood and Brakeley Rough which are recognized as Ancient Woodland. Friar's Rough near the canal to the west of the parish is also a Site of Biological Importance and its ground flora is indicative of Ancient Woodland.

The landscape of Little Leigh has undergone considerable change over the years including hedgerow removal, loss of orchards, infilling of ponds and the fencing of parts of the flood plain. Farm diversification has resulted in barn conversions and the development of equestrian facilities. Most barn conversions have been made sympathetically using traditional materials. In some cases associated gardens have encroached into the open field structure. Equestrian related development has had a significant effect on the landscape due to the construction of stable blocks, sheds, ménages and the subdivision of fields with fencing.

Other developments include new agricultural buildings and extensions to the primary school, public houses and various homes. Permanent moorings have been created along the canal. A number of households have replaced natural hedges with walls, fencing and gates and some front gardens have been paved to create parking space. In some cases hedges of native species have been replaced by quick growing conifer hedges, which appear particularly out of character. All of these cumulative changes have affected the setting and character of the village but not all are adverse. More recently, field margins have been introduced as a result of government policy. Some landowners have planted additional hedgerows and trees in field corners.

4.3 Landscape Character Areas (see Appendix 5)

Little Leigh falls within the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain Character Area 61 (as designated in the former Countryside Commission's 'Countryside Character Volume 2 North West.'). This extensive rolling, pastoral plain extends from the Mersey Valley with its urban and industrial development in the north and as far as the Shropshire Hills in the south. To the east and south east are the developed areas of the Potteries and Cannock Chase. Appendix 5 indicates the relationship between national, county and local landscape character assessments.



The Vale Royal Landscape Character Assessment (SPD 5) includes two character types within the parish. These are Undulating Enclosed Farmland (Type 4) and River Valley (Type 8). These generic types have been split into unique Landscape Areas, namely Lower Weaver Valley (8C) and Whitley and Comberbach Undulating Enclosed Farmland (4D).

4D. Whitley and Comberbach Undulating Enclosed Farmland

This gently undulating farmland with underlying Bollin Mudstone is covered by glacial deposits, with an elevation between 30m and 60m above sea level. The field pattern is defined by hedgerows and copses in an area with relatively little woodland. Other features include brooks within steep wooded cloughs. Scattered villages, dwellings and farmsteads are linked by a network of rural lanes. The main roads erode local tranquility. From the south of the area there are distance views across the Weaver Valley. For the purposes of this VDS this has been subdivided into the following areas

4D1 *Little Leigh Open Fields*

The area to the south of the A533 Runcorn Road to Leigh Lane and to the north of the A533 to Heath Lane is undulating farmland. Here the landscape is more open and the field structure relatively large and rectilinear. Fencing and hedgerows enclose the fields with less woodland. St Michael's church spire is visible in the landscape. There are distant views from Leigh Lane which forms a ridgeline to the south of the area. The view across the Weaver Valley towards Weaverham in the south is marred by pylons, which traverse southwestwards towards the Sandstone Ridge. Frodsham Hill and the radio masts at Delamere are prominent landmarks. There are also views north towards the wooded backdrop of Whitley Parish and in good visibility the Pennines can be seen to the east.

4D2 *Little Leigh Enclosed Fields*

This area lies to the north of the Parish adjoining Whitley and extending to Comberbach and Barnton in the east. It includes farmland to the west between the A49 and the A533. The field sizes are relatively small, less rectilinear and enclosed by hedgerows. Although overall woodland cover is low, small copses associated with ponds, watercourses and hedgerow trees, create a well wooded appearance. To the south east of the area, a small pine copse forms a distinctive feature and here the pylons are prominent. Areas of pasture





are now used for horse grazing with timber stable blocks and fields subdivided by electric fencing

8C Lower Weaver Valley

River Weaver improvement was started in the early 1700s to create a navigable waterway, with artificial cuts, locks, sluices and swing bridges to form the Weaver Navigation. It sits in a wide valley with steep wooded sides rising to an elevation of approximately 30m above sea level and is an important recreational resource. The valley has small tributaries and distinctive clough woodland. A few scattered farms are sited on the higher ground. Distant views are restricted by the valley sides which form the skyline. The Trent and Mersey Canal follows the northern side of the valley with its associated structures and artifacts of industrial archaeology, many of which are listed.

For the purposes of this document this area has been subdivided into two landscape types, namely flood plain farmland and valley edge farmland which extends to the Trent and Mersey Canal. (This complements the designation in the adjacent Weaverham Parish Landscape Assessment approved as an SPG by Vale Royal Borough Council in 2005). The landscape types are described below:

8C1 Flood Plain Farmland

8C1A Bradleymeadow West

The western part of the flood plain is broad with few trees and hedgerows. Large fields are fenced for arable and pasture. A public footpath follows the river's edge. There are views eastwards along the valley to Weaverham where a housing estate can be seen within a wooded backdrop. Scattered dwellings and woodland are visible on the upper part of the valley edge. A transition occurs from the meandering river with reed beds and scattered trees to the artificial cut of the Weaver Navigation with its piled edge, railings and boat moorings. The character is less rural near Acton Swing Bridge which carries the A49. Here a row of cottages flank the far bank of the Weaver and an island, created when a new cut was made in the 1770's, is home to a river cruising club. The old stone road bridge is nearby. Electricity pylons cross the valley from the northeast and a network of overhead power lines add to the visual clutter. A disused pumping station is situated on the near bank.

8C1B Bradleymeadow East

The eastern part of the flood plain is similar to the western end but narrower. This section is more tranquil with significant wildlife activity. The pylons continue southwest across the valley floor and skyline. Views include the dredging lagoon at Saltersford to the east and the wooded valley side, Bradleymeadow wood, to the north. The Saltersford footbridge over the old course of the river is a distinctive feature.

8C2 Valley Edge

8C2A Willow Green Fields

This part of the valley edge is more open and less steep than the eastern section. The contours rise from the flood plain up to the Trent and Mersey Canal at 25m above sea level. There are views south across the valley from the towpath to Acton Bridge and Weaverham, with longer views westwards towards the Sandstone Ridge and Frodsham Hill. Here pylons and a caravan park on the far bank are prominent features.

8C2B Hawton Clough to Brakeley Rough

This part of the valley edge is a steeply wooded escarpment. Brakeley Rough is a well wooded deep ravine and Hawton Clough encloses Little Leigh Pond which is almost hidden from view. Bradleymeadow Wood flanks the southern slope of the canal bank with scattered scrub and some rough grazing at the edge of the flood plain. The tranquil, wooded setting of the canal has an attractive, intimate character. The bird life and displays of spring wild flowers are greatly valued by local people. The canal bridges and Saltersford Tunnel have interesting historic value. The overhead electricity line is quite prominent as it crosses the skyline.





4.4 Landscape Character Guidelines

These guidelines are to ensure that any future development is in keeping with the distinctive character of the village. The objectives are to:

- Conserve, maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape of fields, hedgerows, small copses, ponds and watercourses.
- Conserve and maintain the network of lanes with their associated verges and hedgerows.
- Conserve, maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the parish.
- Encourage any new development to fit in with the landscape.
- Balance the needs of the local community with the requirements of recreation and tourism.
- Conserve the rural character of the lanes by the sensitive use of traditional materials for kerbs, enclosure, gateways and signage.

4.4.1 Boundaries and Field patterns

- The network of hedgerows should be maintained by planting in gaps and replacing dead trees.
- The open character of the valley floor should be maintained and further enclosure by fencing discouraged.
- Fencing such as post and rails should be in keeping with their surroundings.
- Ancient field patterns should be conserved to provide continuity in the landscape. (BE1, NE1, NE8) NPPF

4.4.2 Biodiversity

- The biodiversity of woodland, grass and arable land can be enhanced by developing and linking buffer strips along hedgerows to create wildlife corridors.
- Ponds, brooks and streams should be actively conserved and enhanced. New features should be encouraged.

- Protected species must be considered when making alterations to existing buildings or when constructing new buildings.
- Local wildlife and habitats should be considered when making alterations to existing buildings or when constructing new buildings. (NE4, NE5, NE6, NE8, NE9, NE1) NPPF

4.4.3 Woods, Orchards and Trees

- Woodland cover is encouraged by planting trees in groups, field corners and along watercourses. Hedgerows trees should be planted where possible and especially where those which have been lost or are in decline need replacement. When considering new planting it is important that views are not obstructed.
- Existing woodlands should be managed to ensure a diversity of canopy structure and ground flora.
- Opportunities to restore or create orchards, once widespread in the parish, should be encouraged. (NE9, NE10) NPPF

4.4.4 Recreational activities

- New recreational development should be well-sited using materials in keeping with the landscape and heritage.(BE1)





4.4.5 Views

The most important views in the village are identified on the map at the beginning of this document.

- Important views should be maintained including views out across the Weaver Valley, to Whitley to the north and views of St Michael and All Angels' church spire.
- Consider views of Little Leigh from the Weaver Valley and avoid building on the valley crest.
- Consider views from the canal and valley edge when any new development is proposed within the valley floor.
- Avoid developments and planting which prevent or diminish the important views within the parish.
- Opportunities for creating additional viewpoints should be encouraged.

Village Aspirations:

- The village provides opportunities for walking, cycling and riding and the village is keen to create new recreational activities for residents.
- A suitable site should be identified and developed for young people to play sport.
- Recreational access to the river and canal should be improved.
- Parking facilities should be provided for users of the Weaver Valley and boat moorings.
- Access improvements should be made to the canal towpath and Weaver Way.
- Land could be made available for a community allotment.

5 Buildings in Little Leigh

Little Leigh is split into two main clusters: The 'village centre' south of Runcorn Road and 'Ash House Lane' towards the north of the parish.

The village centre includes St Michael and All Angels Church built in 1879 (listed together with the Lych-gate) and the village hall, originally built as a school in 1840. Little Leigh Primary School was constructed in the 1960s and has been extended a number of times since then. There are also several farms, older cottages and an estate of newer properties built between the late 1960s and early 1980s.

A small cluster of ribbon development in Ash House Lane includes the Baptist Church, Crumleigh Heath Farm, the Country Kennels and a row of post war housing with some recent detached infill housing.

There is small scale ribbon development along Smithy Lane and Runcorn Road. There are scattered farms, cottages, two public houses and a restaurant on the A49, Warrington Road. Several dwellings and the Holly Bush public house are listed for their historic importance as a group. Two seventeenth century half timbered thatched cottages remain. Earlier thatched properties have since been re-roofed in slate.

Distinctive buildings, structures and open spaces are listed in Appendix 2.

Older buildings in the village are constructed of Cheshire brick with welsh slate roofs. Some are rendered and painted in pastel shades. Several imposing farmhouses were built in the nineteenth century. The 1851 census lists 22 farms. The commercial buildings in the village including a garage on Shutley Lane built in the 1930s, a lighting business on Ash House Lane and a haulage depot on Marsh Lane. Agricultural buildings include impressive traditional red brick and modern steel barns clad in metal or timber.

The rural character of the village is emphasized where fields adjoin the roads and some outstanding viewpoints are and these are indicated on Map 1.





5.1 The Village Centre

St Michael and All Angels Church and the village hall are on Church Road near the village centre. The church, built in 1879 is Grade II listed and replaced a chapel of ease which was situated in the grounds of the existing churchyard. The church is constructed of high quality brick in the Early English style. The original roof was replaced with Welsh slate in 2003 and the impressive spire is surmounted by a gold cock weather vane. Unique features include ornate terracotta moulded crosses on each roof gable. A detailed terracotta sculptured reredos depicting the last supper is situated behind the altar. At the eastern end is a fine moulded rose window. The Lych-gate was added in 1882, and is Grade II listed. The old graveyard lies in front of the church and is enclosed by native limes protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The graveyard in current use is to the rear and enclosed by hedges and mature sycamores.

The village hall stands opposite the church and was formerly the village school. The building was donated by Lord Leigh in 1840. It is a basic shell constructed of brick and slate, well used and in need of refurbishment. A recent annex to the building contained the post office until its closure in 2008. The grass area to the front of the hall is bounded by white painted iron railings and two mature beech trees overhang the building. The car park to the rear is bounded by an incomplete sandstone wall which once formed a cattle-keep thought to be used as an overnight pen by drovers using the route now followed by the A49.

The cottages next to the village hall were originally thatched and it is thought that the bricks were made in a brickworks situated near the Holly Bush pub. Keepers Cottage, next to the village hall, was the school caretaker's house. The neighbouring School House was the headmaster's house. The three farms situated around the church were purchased when Lord Leigh's estate of 1200 acres was sold in 1918. The Old Parsonage, west of the church, was rebuilt in 1864 and replaced a parsonage residence dating from 1717. A row of semi-detached Victorian cottages lie to the east of the church and were built for agricultural workers in 1919. They are constructed of brick and render with distinctive porches. Other properties on Church Road include large modern bungalows with dormer windows.

Housing is concentrated between the A533 Runcorn Road and the church. Prior to the Second World War there were few houses in this area including Easy Heath Farm, Blakemere Cottage, Weaver View Farm and Leigh Hall Farm. Heathside on Runcorn Road was originally two cottages one of which was the village shop. A row of houses and bungalows were built by the council on Shutley and Brakeley Lane in the 1940s. Some of these properties are now owned by Weaver Vale Housing Association and have been provided with

solar panels. Some of them back onto a play area which has a range traditional of play facilities. The play area forms an important area of open space and is being refurbished. A triangular grass area at the junction of Brakeley Lane and Shutley Lane contains a group of red oaks.

Orchard Drive and St Michael's Close were the first phase of an estate development which was commenced in the late 1960s. Church Meadows completed the final stage in the 1980s. Some of these houses have been extended and gardens paved for additional parking.

The primary school was built in the sixties and replaced the original village school. It is popular because of its academic record so it attracts many children from outside the village. The resulting increase in traffic creates congestion and parking problems at school times. The school has a large footprint and has been extended several times. A number of temporary wooden classrooms have been added which encroach on the grass playing field. A small woodland area is situated to the side of the building.

5.2 Ash House Lane Area

Ash House Lane is bordered on the south side by semi-detached houses of brick with tiled roofs, constructed by the council in 1931. The houses face north across open farmland and form the second largest group of houses in Little Leigh. Traditional Cheshire railings are situated at the junction of Shutley Lane, Ash House Lane and Cogshall Lane. Crumleigh Heath Farm is situated at this junction. The farmhouse is imposing, with tall, distinctive chimneys. It was built in 1853 and has recently been sympathetically renovated. The barns and outbuildings, some dating back to 1845, have been converted for equestrian use, consisting of ménages, stables and new steel clad outbuildings. Some tree planting has taken place but modern buildings and the horse box parking is prominent, particularly when viewed from the west.

The Baptist Church is a modest grey rendered brick building built in 1829. The large open car park is situated to the side and enclosed by a post and rail fence with a few trees at the boundaries. In contrast, the churchyard to the rear forms quite an intimate and tranquil open space enclosed by brick walls. Alma House, a former slaughterhouse, is a detached two storey house of Cheshire brick with a number of outbuildings and stables. This property used to stand alone but some infill development of detached brick houses has blended in well.





Ash House Farm is a large imposing brick house with a slate roof which has recently been extended. It sits to the west of the main group of houses. There is a large weeping ash tree in the front garden. The outbuildings have been converted to equestrian use and some tree planting has helped to break up views of the barns from the west. Ash House, a former plant breeding station, is a utilitarian, brick, two storey block with an attached car park. It was extended some years ago and is now occupied by a lighting company and other small businesses.

To the south side of the lane, Hollybank is a large detached brick house which has been improved and extended in recent years in keeping with the character of the area. A new access has been created using traditional materials. Tall Lombardy poplars are significant and the remnant of an orchard remains.



5.3 Smithy Lane Area

Smithy Lane area consists of a row of semi-detached houses built in the 1930s, constructed of brick with tile roofs and bay windows. These properties are set well back from the road and are enclosed by walls or hedges. A large oak tree is a significant feature. There are several older cottages including Smithy Cottage, a white rendered building set in large gardens enclosed by a high conifer hedge. The house is situated on the site of the old Smithy Cottage, its garage being the original smithy.



The Holly Bush public house on the A49 Warrington Road, previously the 'Bowling Green,' was built around 1641 and is the earliest building in the area. It remained in the Cowap family until 1990 and is one of the few remaining examples of part farmhouse, part inn. The building is one of the most significant in the village and its thatched roof and timber frame is characteristic of buildings of this period. It was extended in 1848 and again in recent times to provide a restaurant. The pub and adjoining seventeenth century barns are Grade II listed, and are part of the Bartington Green Conservation area, the smallest conservation area in the former Vale Royal Borough. The beer garden creates an attractive setting and the cobble yard to the rear links the barns which have been sympathetically converted to overnight accommodation. This group of listed buildings includes the half timbered, thatched Holly Bush Cottage which has been restored after severe damage caused by a large vehicle.

6 Highways and Street Furniture

The village is bisected by the A533 Runcorn Road and is linked to Barnton by a narrow footpath. While some of the roads have pavements, the unclassified country lanes have narrow grass verges and traditional hedgerows.

During commuting hours Leigh Lane, Ash House Lane and Smithy Lane carry a heavy flow of traffic relative to their size as they are used as 'rat runs' to avoid the traffic lights at the junction of the A49 and A533. The popularity of the village school adds to the traffic during school hours and parking obstructs adjacent roads creating a problem for residents and farmers. An unofficial one-way system has been agreed between the school and residents but is not always observed, especially by drivers unfamiliar with the system.

There are several livery yards in the village and the surrounding lanes are popular with riders.

Footpaths in the parish are generally accessed from roads and lanes, many of which are unlit and have limited visibility and clearance. As with most small villages, there is a concern among residents about speeding traffic creating a potential hazard to pedestrians. There are around 6.8 miles of public rights of way in the parish, and these are shown on Map 1. They are predominantly public footpaths and one restricted byway which links Willow Green Lane to Leigh Lane. The footpath along the River Weaver is part of the Weaver Way and the canal towpath is part of the Cheshire Ring canal walk, both important long distance recreation routes. In recent years some rights of way have been improved by replacing stiles with steel kissing gates.

The Cheshire Cycleway (Route 70) passes through the village and is very well used. National Cycle Route 5 crosses Acton Swing Bridge and follows the Weaver Navigation towards Frodsham.

With transport deregulation the village has no bus service, although several shelters and bus stops remain.

Since the reconstruction of the Anderton Boat lift there has been a noticeable increase in recreational boat traffic on the canal and the River Weaver which is important for tourism and the local economy.





Road nameplates, lighting, seats, map sign boards and waste bins are of a variety of styles and ages, reflecting the use of designs prevalent at the time of installation. Telephone and electricity services are nearly all carried above ground and are intrusive in some locations.

Cheshire railings are sited at junctions and other locations, although some are in need of maintenance. There are also traditional cast-iron finger posts at main road junctions and cast iron mile posts on Runcorn Road and on the canal towpath. There are also several traditional cast iron letter boxes.

(T8) NPPF



7 Design Principles and Planning Guidelines

7.1 Introduction

Little Leigh's history, important buildings, and close connections with the rural landscape combine to create the sense of place that defines our community. The Village Design Statement is intended to reflect this local distinctiveness in the variety of styles, ages, uses of buildings and landscapes.

The following sections define design principles that ensure future developments combine good design using appropriate materials so as to complement existing properties and blend in with the rural environment. Some guidelines are illustrated by photographs of the parish and local area to show good practice. Other elements of planning and building regulation have to be satisfied as necessary.

Little Leigh is located in the North Cheshire Green Belt. Within the green belt planning permission will not be given for new buildings except in very special circumstances and for certain specified purposes.

(GS3) NPPF

7.2 The Holly Bush area

The Holly Bush is the centre of the Bartington Conservation Area. This designation means that a high standard of design is required. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, places a duty on local authorities to ensure that development preserves or enhances the area. It states 'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.

In addition, consent may be required for any alteration or demolition of any structure and anyone wishing to cut down, uproot, top, lop, or otherwise destroy trees within the area. Maintenance work on trees must give the Local Planning Authority 6 weeks' prior notice.

(BE 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 23) NPPF





7.3 Building Development

When considering new housing development or alterations to existing properties, it is important that the design blends in with or complements existing construction, especially in the case of distinctive buildings. This section applies to residential, businesses and community buildings. Agricultural buildings are covered in the 7.4 and 7.5.

- Preferred developments comprise individual buildings fronting existing roads, or small courtyard developments mimicking the layout of agricultural buildings.
- Alterations and extensions to existing buildings should be in scale, character and sympathetic to the original buildings with respect to roof line, pitch, materials, windows and external features.
- Flat roofs should be avoided and height should not exceed that of the existing or adjacent buildings.
- Conservatories should be well designed, in keeping with the property using appropriate materials.
- Extension design should take into account the impact of car parking and should avoid creating additional on road parking.
- Where car parking is created in front of properties, avoid the loss of trees and hedges and restrict hard paving such as concrete blocks or tarmac. Porous surfacing such as gravel is preferable to provide adequate drainage, subject to the use of an appropriate colour.
- Consider the use of natural stone setts or brick paving as a junction between the highway and drive.
- Any new development (including replacement dwellings) should reflect and be sympathetic in size, scale and materials with existing development.
- Modern, well designed and sustainable building should not be precluded.
- Barn conversions should be carried out sympathetically, retaining existing features as far as possible. Paved courtyards, boundary features or garages should be constructed with traditional materials or be in keeping with the existing materials.
- The carbon footprint of new developments should be minimized by ensuring that new buildings are energy efficient, use re-cycled or recovered materials where feasible.
- Renewable energy measures and features such as solar panels and small scale wind turbines are encouraged and should be sited so that they do not detract visually from the local environment. (BE1) NPPF

7.3.1 Building Materials and Design Details

- For existing properties, or developments where uniformity of style is required, care should be taken to match the colour and size of bricks wherever possible.
- Brick walls can be painted white with limewash or an equivalent modern coating.
- For existing properties, or developments where uniformity of style is required, care should be taken to match the existing materials, colour and size of slates or tiles.
- For older and historic buildings, doors and windows should be in like-for-like style and materials corresponding with the age and style of the building.
- For buildings that are not listed or are outside the Conservation Area, doors, windows and porches should be in keeping with the original style and design of existing dwellings.
- UPVC windows, double glazed units, cladding, soffits or fascias are not acceptable on listed buildings, or in the Conservation Area.
- The design and materials for doors, windows and porches should be appropriate to the overall style of the building, whether traditional or modern.
(BE1, BE6, H8, H10) NPPF

Village aspirations:

There are plans to renovate the village hall when funds become available, or to identify a site for a new village hall.

7.4 Existing Agricultural Buildings

The existing agricultural buildings make a significant contribution to the character of the village and are described in Section 5.

- Where practicable they should be kept in agricultural use;
- Where this is not economically viable but other uses could ensure the maintenance of the buildings in good repair, the design of any conversions should respect the style and materials of the existing buildings, retain existing characteristic features and minimise the number of new openings.
- Ancillary features such as car-park areas, additional lighting, boundary treatment,





refuse storage etc should be sensitive to the character of the building and its setting.
(GS6, RE5) NPPF

7.5 New Agricultural Buildings

New agricultural buildings may be required to ensure the viability of commercial activities within rural communities for agricultural or equestrian use. Other agricultural development may also be required such as slurry lagoons required to comply with the EEC nitrate regulations.

- New agricultural buildings should be appropriate in design and scale for the intended use. Where they are extensions to existing farming operations, they should wherever practicable be located in or alongside existing groups of buildings. They should be screened from view by existing buildings or by suitable native planting.
- In any new building development consideration will need to be given to access routes, particularly as agricultural vehicles may be relatively large. To ensure highway safety, suitable visibility splays will be needed at entrance points.
- Where hedges have to be removed to accommodate new visibility splays or buildings, re-planting with suitable native species should be carried out.
- Outside normal daylight hours any lighting schemes proposed should limit the spread of light to public areas, highways and neighbouring properties.
- Lighting should be directional, shaded and provided with appropriate controls to ensure that lighting is switched off when it is not in use. Careful screening and siting is necessary to ensure that new steel-framed buildings or other structures are not unduly obtrusive within the landscape.
- Where the buildings cannot be screened, a combination of traditional and modern materials would be preferred. For example, low brick walls with wood cladding and roofed with corrugated sheet in darker shades of green, brown or grey.
(RE3, PPS4, NE8) NPPF

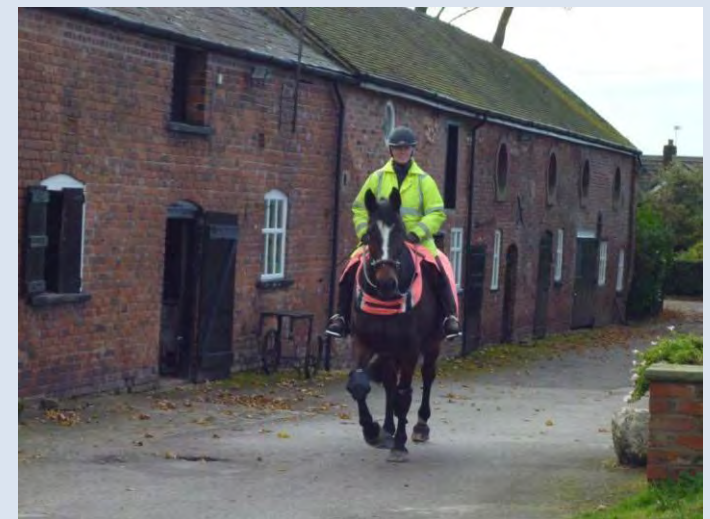
7.6 Equestrian development

As stated in Section 4.2, a number of farms in the village have diversified into equestrian related activities. New development may also include equestrian facilities for private use.

- Equestrian development should be carried out sympathetically, converting existing buildings when possible. Traditional materials such as timber are encouraged.
- It is recommended that new stable blocks, stores, menages and areas for horse box parking are sited near existing buildings or against hedge lines or trees to minimise visual impact.
- In all cases, care should be taken to ensure that positioning of the development will have the least visual impact, with screening recognized as a possible solution.
- Lighting (including floodlighting) should be directional, shaded and provided with appropriate controls to ensure that lighting is switched off when it is not in use.
- Temporary stables are preferred and should be of treated wooden construction with pitched roofs finished in grey or green.
- Hedgerows or post and rail fencing are recommended. Where fields are subdivided dark tape electric fencing is preferable.
- The management of equestrian facilities to avoid the break-up of the traditional hedgerow and field patterns needs careful planning. (RE9) NPPF

7.7 Boundaries

- Local vernacular such as brick walls, timber palisade, iron railings and native hedges such as holly, beech, yew, hawthorn and hornbeam are preferred to integrate the built area into the rural environment.
- Developments or major changes should seek to maintain traditional rural boundaries using hedges, post-and-rail fencing or Cheshire railings.
- Security fencing such as steel palisade or chain link is considered inappropriate in a rural context. If a secure boundary is required for commercial premises, weldmesh in a dark colour such as black or dark green would be preferable for fencing and gates. (BE1, T1, T8, NE8) NPPF
- Vehicle parking areas and other hard standings should be screened





by fencing or trees and hedges.

- Boundary walls, fences, gates and hedges should reflect existing materials of the property. Hedges should be maintained at a moderate height and width. Conifer hedges such as Leylandii and concrete fences are considered to be out of character. (BE1, NE8) NPPF

7.8 Access

- All development should provide adequate space for vehicles to limit the need to back out onto roads.
- Where hedges have to be removed to accommodate visibility splays, replanting with suitable native species is recommended.
- Access should be designed to allow for the types of vehicle likely to use the development e.g. waste and recycling vehicles.
- Footpaths should be constructed from natural materials to complement their surroundings in colour, material, size and laying pattern.
- High solid gates with lighting, over complicated steelwork or with ornate embellishments are urban in appearance and out of keeping with the village. (BE1, T1, T8, NE8) NPPF

7.9 Highways, Street Furniture and Utilities

Features such as Cheshire railings and cast iron finger posts form part of the intrinsic character of the village.

- Finger-posts and mile-posts and stretches of Cheshire railings should be retained and painted in black and white wherever possible. The use of new Cheshire railings in appropriate locations is encouraged.
- A coordinated, consistent approach to the replacement of street furniture is required. The use of modern design and materials should not be excluded provided they are in keeping with the character and appearance of the area in which they are to be located. Timber is considered more appropriate in the Weaver Valley.
- Litter bins, bollards, seats etc., should be functional and robust, and should coordinate with the surroundings in terms of colour, siting and materials. Ideally,

they should be designed as part of a family of street furniture.

- Light fixtures should be appropriate to their rural location in terms of material, scale, design and illumination. Any new or replacement lights should be low energy and minimize light pollution. Visual clutter should be avoided by using existing poles where possible and solar lights should be considered. Low level lighting may be appropriate in certain sensitive locations.
- Traffic signs and road markings should be kept to a minimum to avoid urbanization. Existing structures could be used for signage to avoid clutter. Any traffic calming and parking restrictions should be designed to be in keeping with the rural environment.
- Surfacing to public rights of way or the canal towpath should use sympathetic materials such as bound gravel.
- Structures such as substations should blend in with the surroundings and wherever possible fenced or screened with vegetation.
(BE1, PS1) NPPF

Village aspirations:

- Faster broadband in the village.
- Potential solutions should be identified to address school parking and traffic congestion.
- A lower speed limit is desirable through the village.
- A safe walking and cycling route is required between Little Leigh and Barnton.
- New footpaths or cycle routes are needed, particularly to create a safe route to the school.
- New developments such as boat moorings, school development and tourist related developments should include traffic and parking solutions.
- Replace stiles with kissing gates or remove them where unnecessary, to improve accessibility, subject to agreement with landowners.
- Consideration should be given to locating new electricity or telephone cables underground.



Local Plan Policies referred to in the Village Design Statement

The Vale Royal Borough Local Plan First Review Alteration, adopted 16th June 2006:

- BE1** Safeguarding and improving the quality of the environment
- BE5** Historic environment – Listed Buildings
- BE6** Alterations/extensions to Listed Buildings
- BE7** Changes of use to Listed Buildings
- BE8** Listed Buildings and archaeology
- BE9** Demolition control of Listed Buildings
- BE10** Historic Environment – Conservation Areas
- BE11** Proposals for development on sites which lie outside the conservation area but which would affect its setting or views in or out of the area
- BE14** Other sites of archaeological importance
- BE16** Advertisements and signs
- BE21** Renewable energy
- BE22** Locally Important buildings
- BE23** Conservation Area Appraisals
- GS3** North Cheshire Green belt
- GS6** Change of use, conversion of rural buildings
- H8** Extensions/Alterations to dwellings
- H9** Extensions to residential rural building conversions
- H10** Rebuilding/replacement of dwellings
- H11** Extensions to residential curtilages in the open countryside and in the Green Belt
- NE1** Protection of the Nature Conservation Resource
- NE4** Threatened and Priority habitats
- NE5** Endangered species
- NE6** Wildlife Corridors and Green Wedges
- NE7** Protection and enhancement of landscape features
- NE8** Provision and enhancement of landscape in new development
- NE9** Trees and woodland
- NE10** Trees and woodland
- NE11** Areas of Special County Value
- PS1** Public services development in the open countryside
- P4** Light pollution
- P8** Contaminated and Derelict land
- RE3** New agricultural buildings
- RE5** Change of use of agricultural and other rural buildings
- RE9** Equestrian development
- RE12** Farm diversification
- RT1** General Requirements for Recreational / Tourism Development
- T1** General requirements
- T8** Pedestrians and Walking
- T13** Car Parking
- T19** Traffic calming

Appendix 1 The Village Design Statement and Local Planning Policies

The planning powers of Vale Royal Borough Council transferred to the new Cheshire West and Chester authority in November 2008. It was the intention of CWAC that documents such as this one that were commenced by predecessor authorities would be completed and adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) by CWAC.

This SPD forms part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Cheshire West & Chester. It should be read in conjunction with the adopted Vale Royal Borough Local Plan First Review Alteration 2006 as well as the emerging CWAC Local Plan, which when adopted will replace parts of the Vale Royal Local Plan. The Little Leigh Village Design Statement will remain a part of the Cheshire West & Chester LDF after the Local Plan is adopted and it will be reviewed on a regular basis through the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to ensure that it remains relevant and does not need updating.

Vale Royal Borough Council made a submission to the Secretary of State in December 2008 to save a vast majority of the Local Plan policies beyond June 2009. All policies, with the exception of GS1 and H1, have been requested to be saved until such a time as they are replaced by parts of the CWC LDF. This means that the policies on which this SPD is based will remain in force until they are formally replaced. A decision is still awaited from the Secretary of State on this matter and any amendments that are made to the saved policies will be taken into account before this document is adopted.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is prepared by central government to guide local authorities on matters of planning policy. Local authorities must take this document into account in preparing their development plan documents including Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) such as this Village Design Statement (VDS). This replaced the previous guidance in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS) in March 2012. The Vale Royal Borough Local Plan First Review Alteration was adopted under this guidance and is in the process of being replaced. This VDS is in accordance with the existing Local Plan, and with the new NPPF. It will need to be reviewed when the new local plan is adopted.

Appendix 2 Distinctive Buildings and Structures

Church of St Michael and All Angels (1878-9)

The church, which is Grade II listed, was designed by Edmund Kirkby and replacing a former Chapel of Ease. It is constructed of brick with attractive terracotta detailing in the Early English style. The slate roof was renewed in 2003 by grant and donation. The spire, surmounted by a gold cock weather-vane was also reslated at that time.

Baptist Church (1829 Locally listed)

The church is a modest utilitarian building of brick construction with grey render to the front in Ash House Lane. There is a small graveyard to the rear enclosed by brick wall.

Crumleigh Heath Farmhouse (1853 Locally listed)

This is a large imposing two storey brick farmhouse with a slate roof and tall distinctive chimneys. It has recently been sympathetically renovated with a small brick extension.

Easy Heath Farmhouse (c1650)

An attractive, Grade II listed seventeenth century brick, timber framed thatched cottage on Shutley Lane set in a substantial garden with pond and orchard. There is a recent brick outbuilding to the rear.

Holly Bush Inn (c1641)

The Grade II listed inn together with its outbuildings, forms part of an important group within Bartington Green Conservation Area. It is timber framed brick building with a thatched roof and a recent brick and slate roof extension. The adjacent listed barn and granary are brick with slate roofs and sympathetically converted to a barn hotel. It has an attractive beer garden to the side with a Grade II listed sundial. There is a stone in the field opposite the Holly Bush which marks the boundary with the neighbouring parish of Bartington.





Holly Bush Cottage

The cottage is early seventeenth century, Grade II listed, with early nineteenth and late twentieth century alterations. It stands on the A49 and is constructed of brick with a timber frame and a thatched roof. The cottage was substantially damaged by a lorry but has been sympathetically rebuilt. It has a garden and orchard to the side.

Horns Inn (Marco Marco Italian restaurant, 1734 Locally listed)

Significant two storey white rendered building with slate roof and garden fronting the A49. The original east part dates back to the sixteen century.

Leigh Arms (c1760 Locally listed)

This public house and restaurant is a white rendered brick building with a slate roof, renovated and extended in 1979. It has a large garden to the side on the bank of the River Weaver. It was formerly known as the Bridge Inn. There is a sandstone boundary stone outside the entrance to mark the transfer of responsibility for the road from the County Council to the trustees of the Weaver Navigation. Locally listed.

Leigh Hall Farm (Locally listed)

The farmhouse is a three storey Georgian brick farmhouse with a slate roof facing Church Road.

Willow Green House

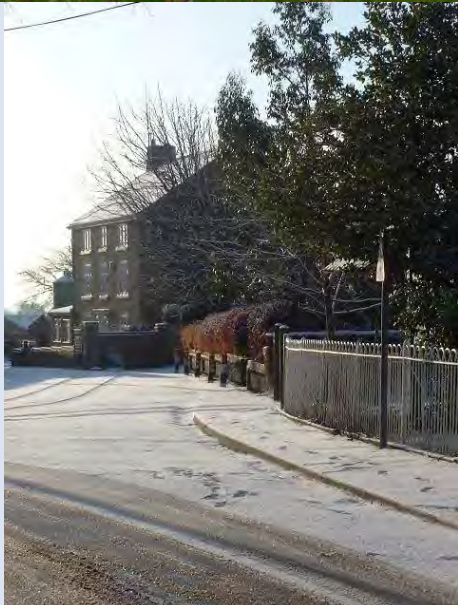
An imposing brick built house with slate roof set in substantial gardens and overlooking the Weaver Valley with brick built extension.

Acton Bridge

The black and white cantilever steel swing bridge was opened in 1933 and built by Joseph Parks of Northwich. The bridge is electrically operated and pivots on an island created between the old river course and the 'new' cut. It is a significant landscape feature.

Canal Aqueduct (1777)

A Grade II listed brick aqueduct carries the Trent and Mersey Canal over access to Weaver View Farm. It is visible from the footpath along the river Weaver.



Bradleymeadow canal bridge

A Grade II listed white painted brick structure over the Trent and Mersey Canal. It is visible from the footpath along the Weaver.

Village Hall (Locally Listed)

Formerly the village school donated by Lord Leigh in 1840, the village hall is constructed of brick and slate. It is a basic shell, well used but in need of refurbishment which is planned as funds become available. The grass area to the front of the hall is bounded by iron railings and used by the resident play group. A map board and parish notice board are within the area. Two large beech trees, which are subject to preservation orders, overhang the end of the building. The village hall car park bounded by an incomplete sandstone wall which is believed to have formed a cattle keep used as an overnight pen by drovers using the route of the A49 to markets in Shropshire.





Significant Open Spaces

St Michael and All Angels Churchyard

The church is surrounded by a churchyard bounded by holly hedges and a row of lime trees. There are significant specimens of yew and pine. The graveyard to the rear is more open. A small memorial garden has been created to the side.

Play Area

This is a small grassed area accessed from Shutley Lane. It is sandwiched between the school and the rear of the properties on Brakeley Lane. It is well used by children and is being refurbished following village consultation.

Village 'Green'

A small triangular grass area with a group of red oaks situated at the junction of Brakeley Lane and Shutley Lane. An adjacent car parking area has been constructed to avoid roadside parking.

Primary School Grounds

There is a grass playing field to the rear with some woodland planting, a vegetable garden, hard play areas and a small garden with silver birches at the front.

Holly Bush Garden

This is an attractive well planted garden containing play equipment. It is enclosed by hedging and trees and black railings front the A49.

Leigh Arms Garden

The garden is a large grass space with play equipment and picnic tables enclosed by low walls. It is close to the River Weaver and near the site of the old swing bridge, the abutments of which can still be seen.



Appendix 3 Statement of Community Involvement

Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): Little Leigh

Early Community Engagement

The early consultation arrangements undertaken by Little Leigh Parish Council during the preparation of the Draft SPD have involved the following meetings. An Environment Group was set up as a result of the Parish Plan and the VDS group grew out of that.

Key dates

Date	Activity	Comments
21.10.05	Little Leigh Parish Plan launched at Trafalgar Day celebration. Action Plan identifies a character assessment to be considered	
27.6.06	Presentation by John Gittins of Cheshire Landscape Trust To Little Leigh Parish Council (LLPC) on Parish Landscape Statements (PLS) and Village Design Statements (VDS)	
August /September 06	Work commences on draft PLS – collation of relevant documents, site survey and assessment/photographs and display including draft plan for consultation	
19.9.06	Update on PLS display for Potato Fest to Parish Plan Group	
30.9.06	Initial community consultation on the draft PLS at the Potato Fest in village hall. Assistance by John Gittins	Approx. 30 written responses plus other visitors. Record photos taken
21.11.06	Parish Council meeting discusses next steps after consultation with JG present	
December 2006	Progress report on PLS consultation to Parish Council with John Gittins	
16.1.07	Parish Council sets up Environment Sub Group	
January 07	Article in Grapevine (Village newsletter) asking for views from anyone who didn't attend Potato Fest as second stage consultation and requesting photographs	A few additional responses received
6.2.07	Update on PLS at Parish Council meeting	
20.2.07	Environment Sub Group meeting attended by John Gittins	
27.3.07	Update at Annual Parish Meeting on PLS	
May 07	First draft PLS text produced	
16.5.07	Environment Sub Group meeting discusses draft PLS.	

	Agreed to keep document as concise as possible with information such as purpose of PLS/ref to planning policies in Appendices	
13.6.07	Environment Sub Group meeting approves draft text with some amendments	Includes comments received from CLT
28.6.07	Second draft of PLS endorsed by Parish Council	
10.7.07	Environment Sub Group meeting	
End July 07	Second draft of PLS sent to VRBC for comment	
3.10.07	Environment Sub Group meeting. John Gittins attended. Awaiting VRBC comments	
17.10.08	Comments received from VRBC	
3 Dec 07	Meeting with VRBC and John Gittins to discuss comments	Boundaries to be altered to tie in with recently adopted VRBC Landscape Character Assessment
Spring 09	Village surveyed for VDS by Environment Sub Group	
October 09	VDS consultation at Halloween event	
April 10	Contributions to VDS collated	
8 May 10	VDS consultation at May Queen event	
10 June 10	VDS consultation at Playspace event	
June 10	VDS guidelines placed on village website	
June 10	First Draft Submitted to Cheshire West and Chester Council for Officer comments.	
Nov 10	Initial internal Officer comments on Draft received from Cheshire West and Chester	
January 11	Meeting with Spatial Planning Officers to work through comments.	
May 12	Meeting with Spatial Planning Officer to finalise comments	
November 12	Environment Sub Group Finalises illustrations and text Parish Council approves Final Draft	

Appendix 4 Glossary of terms used in the Village Design Statement

AMR - Annual Monitoring Report

A document to be produced each year by Cheshire West and Chester council showing progress in achieving both Local Plan policies and the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme and setting out revisions to the Local Development Scheme.

Ancient woodland

Sites which have been continually wooded since 1600AD

AOD

Above Ordnance Datum (sea level)

Character

A distinct, recognizable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another rather than better or worse.

Characterisation

The process of identifying, classifying, mapping and describing areas of similar character and describing their character.

Clough

Steep sided valley

Conservation area

A Conservation Area is an area that the Council has recognised as having ‘special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance’. The types of areas designated as Conservation Area varies greatly from historic towns, to estate villages and industrial complexes. The architectural or historic interest of a conservation area is not just created by individual buildings, but by groups of structures, with associated landscaping and boundary treatments. Trees also have an important impact too, as do floor surface coverings and views into and out of the area. All features of an area contribute in some way its character.

CWAC

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Features

Particularly prominent or eye-catching elements, like tree clumps, church towers or wooded skylines.

Green belt

A defined area of land, largely rural in character, which is adjacent to the main urban areas and which is protected from development by permanent and severe restrictions on building. The emphasis is on restricting the sprawl of urban areas, preventing the coalescence of neighbouring towns and preserving the individual character of settlements, though a green belt may also provide suitable locations for recreational development.

Landscape Character Areas

These are single unique areas and are discrete geographical areas of a particular type, for example Lower Weaver Valley.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

A tool for identifying the features that gives a locality its sense of place and pinpointing what makes it different from its neighbouring areas.

Landscape types

These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use, and settlement pattern. For example: wooded escarpment or river valley.

LDF – Local Development Framework

The collective name given to all those policies and documents forming the planning framework for Cheshire West and Chester

Local plan

Any Plan proposed or adopted by a Local Planning Authority for part or all of the area of a Structure Plan. Most Local Plans are prepared by Local Councils and are detailed plans for land use, transport and environmental matters.

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

Introduced March 2012 replacing planning policy statements

Parish Landscape Statement

A Parish Landscape Statement is a similar document to a village design statement, but which, using the Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage Landscape Assessment Guidance, goes into more detail about the parish landscape.

Parish Plan

A statement of how the community sees itself developing over the next few years. It:

- Reflects the views of all sections of the community
- Identifies which features and local characteristics people value
- Identifies local problems and opportunities
- Spells out how residents want the community to develop in future

The process was developed by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and is promoted by them as part of its 'Vital Villages' programme.

Sensitivity

A judgment of how sensitive or vulnerable a landscape is to change.

SCI – Statement of Community Involvement

The document that sets out how the Local Planning Authority will involve and consult the public in the production of the Local Development Framework and on planning applications.

Structure Plan

Structure plans are prepared by the County Planning Authority. The Structure Plan provides the strategic framework for Local Plans and Development Control. In doing so, the Structure Plan takes account of national and regional policies as they affect the physical and environmental planning of the area concerned. It does not deal with individual properties nor show the boundary areas where particular policies are to apply.

SPD – Supplementary Planning Document

A document which expands or supplements policy in development plan documents, for example design guidance, parking standards etc.

Sustainable Development

Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Tree Preservation Order

An order made by the Local Planning Authority to prohibit the felling, lopping or willful destruction of a single tree, group of trees or a substantial woodland specified in the Order without the consent of the Local Planning Authority.

VDS – Village Design Statement

Document prepared by the local community setting out local aspirations for the future development and conservation of the village. This may include information on landscape character, protection of open spaces and important views.

For further information

The names of parish councilors and contact details for the Parish Clerk can be found at www.littleleigh.net

Appendix 5 Little Leigh Character Assessment

The Relationship between National County and Local Landscape Assessments

