

Tarporley



Village Design Statement

Supplementary Planning Guidance

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Requests for information on the preparation of Tarporley Village Design Statement should be made to Tarporley Parish Council.

For general information on Village Design Statements contact Environmental Policy, Vale Royal Borough Council on 01606 867864 or Cheshire Landscape Trust on 01244 376323

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1. Introduction

Tarporley has seen many changes over the last 20 years. New houses, shops and the much welcomed by-pass has resulted in the village doubling in size to a population of approximately 2,500, whilst still retaining its rural environment.

The purpose of the Village Design Statement (VDS) is to ensure that the distinctive character of the village is maintained and continues to make it a special place in which to live and work.

The VDS offers a positive way for local people to ensure that the nature and quality of development makes a natural progression from village past into village future. The aim is to present design objectives that residents and developers should consider when proposed building projects are to take place in the village.

The idea of a Village Design Statement came from the Parish Council but the whole community was invited to participate in its preparation. Information was circulated via posters and on the Tarporley web site (<http://www.tarporley.net/index.htm>). Individual discussions were held with the primary and secondary schools in the village. The Executive Director of the Cheshire Landscape Trust facilitated and guided the preparation process starting with an open, all-day workshop in Spring 2001. Other meetings followed to identify the special features and characteristics of Tarporley. During the Summer photographs and notes were displayed at the Community Centre on general election polling day (when the building was used as a polling station), at the village carnival and in the library with opportunities for people to record their comments and suggestions.

In the Autumn of 2001, the draft VDS was prepared and a preliminary discussion held with Vale Royal Borough Council officers to check its suitability as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Maps and illustrations and revision of the text were undertaken prior to further community consultation during Summer 2002.

The VDS sets out the views and aspirations of the village within the context of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan, in conjunction with the Cheshire Structure Plan, which shows where development, housing, industry, transport and recreation etc. should occur. Tarporley's Village Design Statement was approved by Vale Royal Borough Council on 19 December 2002 as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Its contents will be taken into account when determining future planning applications.



1984



2. The Village Context

2.1 Historical Context

Tarporley is not only a beautiful but also an historic settlement being recorded in the Domesday Book and lying on the route followed by the packhorses carrying salt from Nantwich to Chester. It was also a stop on the coaching route to London. Records from the Domesday Book tell us that a settlement called 'Torpelei', meaning a pear wood near a hill, existed near the present village location.

In 1292 Tarporley received a charter under the First Royal Earl of Chester, Edward I. With its new status the township flourished and gradually moved from the valley of 'back lanes' (near today's bypass) up the hill to the current site.

There is evidence of Medieval architecture in St Helen's Church (although it was substantially rebuilt in Victorian times), but the predominant influence in the village is Georgian. During this period the High Street and several other prominent buildings acquired the Georgian character that is retained today despite many being built in the Victorian period.

The post-war period heralded another expansion of the village, and the more recent developments and a small business park have brought yet more prosperity to the area.



1881

2.2 The Village Today



1973



2001



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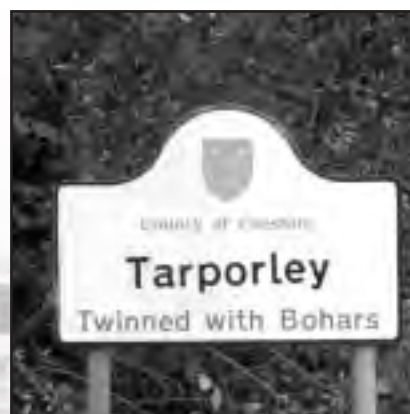
Tarporley lies at the junction of the A49 and A51 roads although a by-pass now takes through traffic out of the village. It is situated approximately halfway between Chester and Nantwich. Older parts of the village were designated as a Conservation Area in 1972 with revision in 1987 and restricted policies over new development and changes to existing buildings have helped to protect its character.

In common with many towns and villages the nature and extent of local commerce has changed markedly over the recent past. Commercial activity is centred on the High Street. Virtually all essential goods and services are available locally although many residents travel to out of town supermarkets and retail parks in addition to shopping locally. There are two small employment areas accommodating offices and light industrial premises. These offer limited employment for local people in addition to that afforded by the retail and financial concerns situated on the High Street. The attractive setting of Tarporley and its buildings, together with the speciality shops and range of services, brings in many visitors.

The presence of a mid-sized secondary school contributes to the range of facilities available to residents. Despite having a number of leisure facilities, a community centre and voluntary organisations in Tarporley, there is no focal point, which serves to bring these together and engender a strong sense of community. Unusual for a village of its size, Tarporley is fortunate in having its own independent Cottage Hospital, situated in Park Road adjacent to a modern Health Centre.

The majority of those in employment commute, often long distances, to work in the large conurbations of Merseyside or Greater Manchester. Because of this large commuter population there is pressure from developers to cater for this particular market. Through community involvement in developing this Design Statement the following concerns were expressed:

- **A disproportionate number of large, 'executive' homes to the detriment of more affordable housing for local people**
- **Increasing pressure for development which is not always sympathetic to the traditional vernacular**
- **Local amenities unable to cope with increased demand, a case in point being the Primary School.**





3. The Character of the Landscape Setting

Tarporley lies in the heart of the Cheshire Plain in the midst of dairy farming countryside on the south side of Luddington Hill. Spectacular views open up from this point to the south-east across the Cheshire Plain, and over rolling countryside towards the Shropshire Hills in the far distance.

The views to the south and south-west from the high ground are of unrivalled beauty, with the Cheshire sandstone ridge pushing out of the plain and topped in the foreground by the medieval castle at Beeston. The well-wooded Peckforton Hills run away from this point towards Shropshire, bordered by well-maintained fields, predominantly of pasture, with the Welsh hills beyond.



Approaching the village from the north-east, the agricultural landscape merges into the more formal Portal parkland, with magnificent mature oak trees leading up to and surrounding a large mansion, with its entrance lodge close to the outskirts of the village. The presence of mature trees in the heart of the village contributes to the rural character. A particular feature and charm is the way in which fields of pasture land reach down into the village in an irregular and natural way, preserving the agricultural setting. Looking south from the High Street, the built environment of the village is in harmony with the landscape. Along the approach roads red sandstone walls, perhaps topped with hedges, form attractive boundaries. The stone undoubtedly came from local quarries and is a visible link to the area's geology.



The farmsteads surrounding the village have an evolving architectural vernacular with Tudor merging into soft red brick of the Georgian era. The farms themselves remain well managed and cared for, with tidy thorn hedges that are generally well stocked with trees. Many of these are mature although farmers are nurturing some saplings. The fields remain small and contribute to the intimate feel of the surrounding countryside.

Landscape Character Guidelines

- The important outward views from the village must be retained to keep Tarporley's rural character.
- The pattern of small fields and hedgerows, as shaped by traditional dairy farming practices, should be retained.
- Existing mature and juvenile trees within the village must be preserved.
- The landscape should be enriched by new tree planting (to ensure a succession of indigenous species) and the creation of new wildlife habitats.
- Sandstone walls must be retained and kept in good order.
- The area around Tarporley should be protected and the built environment maintained in harmony with the landscape.



4. Settlement Pattern Character

Whilst there is a diversity of architectural types and form, the old village displays a strong linear pattern, reflecting its position as an important staging post in the days when horse drawn carriages were the principal means of transport. The village is tightly developed with few remaining open spaces. The majority of post-war development has taken place to the east and south with new houses now being constructed on the northern side. The scale of these developments has extended the built-up boundaries of the village. Such estates of standard pattern houses, whilst not impacting on the historical vernacular, add little to the character of the village.

The High Street, which starts at the junction with Forest Road, has a generous street width which is almost certainly a result of its former use as a market place following the grant of Royal Charter. The High Street remains the main thoroughfare and continues to be the 'centre' of the village by virtue of the concentration of commercial services situated along its length. The majority of the Listed Buildings in Tarporley are located in the central core of the village.

On Forest Road old cottages are found, some constructed in local sandstone and built to house waggoners. More recent developments have taken place infilling gaps and developing housing estates on adjacent fields.

There are a number of roads, alleyways and paths leading off the High Street, some linking to new, small scale residential developments which in the main are sympathetic to the character of the surroundings. Leading off the High Street about half way along its length is Park Road. Bounded by a belt of mature trees, the road leads to the Hospital, Health Centre and the Primary School. Houses are a mixture of cottages, villas and post-war houses and bungalows. A number of footpaths lead off Park Road. At the southern end of Park Road, before rejoining the High Street, is the original Fire Station, now a museum.



At a couple of points along the length of the High Street, there are significant open spaces which provide strong visual ties between landscape and settlement and afford views across to Beeston Castle and Peckforton Castle, and in the distance the Welsh Hills. More open space is located at the rear of the Community Centre towards the end of the High Street. This provides amenities in the form of a children's play area and playing field which is the site for the annual Tarporley Carnival.

The crossroads with Birch Heath Road and Eaton Road marks the end of the High Street. The road continues southwards to the by-pass and on towards Nantwich. One of the two employment areas is located off this road. The other buildings are a mix of cottages, inter-war houses and a more recent residential estate.

Immediately after its junction with the High Street, there are a number of small, sandstone cottages on Birch Heath Road. Further along Birch Heath Road is a small industrial development and the modern Fire Station.

Eaton Road is the site of Tarporley High School which provides leisure facilities including a sports hall, playing fields and public library. Continuing along Eaton Road are several residential developments including council houses and modern private dwellings.

The policy boundary in the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan (adopted 2001) has been tightly drawn around the built-up area of the village to restrict the extent of future development.

Settlement Guidelines

- To protect Tarporley's character and scale, new development must be contained within the existing policy boundary shown on the Local Plan.
- The pattern of development in the old village must be protected and its range of house sizes retained to suit all income levels
- Any future housing schemes must include small sized houses to reflect the variety traditionally found
- Existing open spaces which are important to the character of the settlement or afford important views out of or in to the village must be retained
- New development must include provision of open spaces and complement existing ones
- The footpath network should be extended to new housing areas to provide separate and safe routes for pedestrians to schools and the village centre
- Existing mature trees in the village must be retained and a tree planting scheme devised and implemented which must also blend village edges into the countryside

5. Buildings

5.1 Size and Scale

The vertical emphasis of many buildings in central Tarporley reflects their status and importance. Buildings front directly onto the pavements and steps to front doors are a feature of High Street giving it an urban quality. Large and imposing buildings are found next to modest cottages; shops are adjacent to houses; hotels and pubs mingle with antique shops, boutiques and banks. Many buildings have changed their function over the years, for instance The Old Fire Station Chocolate Shop.

New houses and commercial premises have been constructed at the top end of High Street and recently some backland sites have been opened up for residential development without disrupting the continuity of the streetscene. Here scale, materials and design have been carefully considered and the mix of three and two storey houses reflect many of Tarporley's architectural features and manage generally to retain a harmonious appearance.

5.2 Materials

Brick is the dominant building material for domestic and commercial premises. Mainly mellow Cheshire bricks have been used with the hard, smooth and redder Ruabon type brick occurring in a small number of places such as No.68 High Street and cottages on Park Road. Some buildings have been rendered, probably for weatherproofing reasons, and mostly coloured white or cream. The Crown Hotel and antiques centre next door are examples. Cottages on Forest Road and Birch Heath Road, as well as the Primary School, are built in dressed sandstone, a local material. The gable end of the Manor House on High Street reveals decorative half timbering.

Detailing on buildings is provided in various ways. Lintels over windows and doors may be in sandstone or flat or arched brickwork. Contrast bricks have been used to edge windows and doors or banded through under first floor window sills to link in with decorative quoins. There are many examples in High Street and Forest Road including some on new buildings. Self-colour bricks may project under eaves or over windows and doors in less imposing houses as well as important ones.

New buildings have been integrated most successfully where building materials and details complement those of traditional properties. There are good examples to be found on and behind High Street.

5.3 Roofs and Chimneys

Roofs of nearly all key buildings are of slate which gives important visual harmony. There is the occasional tiled roof (such as the old Police Station), of either red or red/brown mix.

Ridge lines are traditionally parallel to the road, punctuated by the occasional gable end, and this helps to maintain a visual flow. There is great variation in the height of roofs, and to a lesser extent in the degree of pitch. This diversity adds charm and is particularly apparent along High Street and Forest Road. A good example of interesting roofscapes can be found in the new housing at Chestnut Court where stepped rooflines, including pitched roofs over single storey garages, provide an effective link between properties.





Chimneys are a feature of large and small houses. Some stacks incorporate decorative brickwork and a variety of chimney pot designs prevail. Chimneys are found in some of the new housing developments, which also helps those buildings to integrate successfully with the old.

5.4 Windows

Vertical sash windows predominate in High Street, except for the commercial display windows at ground floor level, typically four panes in height by three across but there are some variations. This feature has been carried through to some of the new buildings though unfortunately not all are in the correct proportions.

Windows with semi-circular heads feature not infrequently, especially at first floor level. There is an ornate projecting bay window above No.71 High Street (Fresco's delicatessen) and cottages on Eaton Road have pointed arches. Dormer windows to the second floor are found in old and new buildings on High Street but are not common elsewhere. There are square bay windows in some domestic buildings, especially in double-fronted houses.

5.5 Doors and Porches

Nearly all doors in traditional and many modern residential buildings are six panel wooden doors. Doorcases are an important feature of building design, sometimes recessed, sometimes emphasised by decorative brickwork, stone or wood surrounds to give added size and emphasis. Other decorative features include half-round or rectangular fanlights over doors, pitched pediments or narrow flat canopies.

New housing off High Street has slated pitched canopies (as at Bell Meadow Court) or large flat stone porches supported by sandstone columns (The Close).

Steps may provide access from street level to the front door. Flights vary according to the importance of the building from six to just a single step, normally of stone and with iron banisters. The Swan Hotel has the grandest approach with a double lateral flight.

5.6 Boundaries

Where there is space between the building and pavement, the boundary is normally either a brick or sandstone wall, or iron railings. It is common to find railings on top of a low wall. Nearly all railings are painted black (occasionally dark green or white) perhaps with gold points. There are four or five different designs from fleur de lys to spear points. Most railings are simple vertical rods whilst others have overlapping arched tops. Some new developments have picked up these features (e.g. Cedarwood Court and 33-43 High Street).

Hedges are only a significant part of the streetscene where they remain as part of a field boundary, as south of The Close (the "Daffodil Field"), below the Manor House and on the upper part of Forest Road.



New Building Guidelines

- Terraced cottages or mews type houses are most appropriate to Tarporley. These most closely reflect the continuous building form for which the village is noted and will encourage smaller properties to be provided and balance the influx of large houses built recently.
- Houses in the centre of the village should be a mix of two and three storey to fit in with traditional buildings. Garages should have pitched roofs and be positioned to provide interesting spaces or courtyards.
- Standard pattern estates and “off the shelf” house types must be avoided.
- Buildings constructed hard onto the pavement or with a minimal front garden would pick up existing features of the village.
- Brick must be the predominant building material for all property walls and screen walls either reclaimed bricks from a local source or new red/brown bricks, which closely reflect the Cheshire brick. Light, yellow or dark grey/purple bricks are not suitable. Sandstone would be appropriate. The occasional rendered building would not be out of character but these should be simple and not adorned with mock timbering.
- Incorporating the decorative details found in Tarporley’s traditional buildings, used sensitively, would add interest but must not be used excessively.
- Slate or plain tiles should be used for roofing purposes. Roofs should be pitched at not less than 35% and parallel to the road. Linking different heights of buildings and varying the degree of pitch will provide a traditional roofscape. Rows of gable ends must be avoided.
- Windows that form part of the streetscene must respect traditional proportions. Vertical sash windows would be most in keeping. Large “picture” windows must be avoided in these positions.
- Glass front doors in uPVC frames are inappropriate to Tarporley’s character. Six panel wooden doors would reflect the traditional opening with a fanlight, either half-moon or rectangular, over. If porches are provided they should be small and simple in design.
- Front garden boundaries must be either of brick or sandstone or simple black painted iron railings.



6. Street Furniture



Street furniture such as road signs, lamp posts and litterbins are a mixture of sizes and styles. The black cast iron lighting standards, bollards, litterbins, and the seats found on High Street are appropriate to the area. Similar style street lights, either fixed to buildings or free-standing, have been installed in several of the new housing areas off the High Street. Elsewhere though lamp standards revert to standard concrete or galvanised metal. Unsightly overhead wires are found practically everywhere.

As most commercial premises are small in scale and independently owned shop fronts and signs are generally inoffensive and some add charm and character to the High Street.

An old milestone still exists on the western side of High Street, giving the distance to London. Modern road signs give motorists directions. Fortunately the by-pass has enabled the largest of these to be outside the village proper.

Cheshire railings, a pattern of six horizontal metal rails supported by uprights at yard intervals, are found at some road junctions in the village and outlying locations. Traditionally they are painted black and white.

Street Furniture Guidelines

- The quality of street furniture currently found in the High Street should be adopted for all new installations and extended to other parts of the village. Styles could be of modern design on new developments.
- Wall mounted lights should be considered as they can be very effective on closely grouped buildings. Street lighting and private security lights must aim to reduce glare and light pollution.
- Cables should be placed underground in new developments and efforts made to persuade the relevant utility services to adopt a policy of undergrounding replacement cables elsewhere, especially in key locations.
- Replacement shop signs and frontages must be discrete in size and colour to complement the character of the buildings. Illuminated signs are not appropriate
- Road signs, particularly in the central area, should be carefully located to reduce the appearance of clutter whilst still maintaining clear directions.
- The “Cheshire railings” must be kept and repaired/refurbished where necessary.

7. Highways, Alleyways and Byways

Despite the by-pass the village attracts a considerable amount of traffic. Delivery vehicles apart, most of this is car traffic and the High Street is regularly congested by parked vehicles. This makes it difficult for school and service buses to get through and detracts from the otherwise attractive appearance of High Street. It is, however, a measure of the popularity of Tarporley for trade and tourism.

A key feature of central Tarporley is the number of alleyways and narrow lanes that lead off the main routes. These provide intrigue and interest as well as access to properties of all kinds without disturbing the flow and continuity of the streetscene. In some cases, use has been made of access for the old horsedrawn coaches to land at the rear, such as Market Court.

The roads are surfaced in asphalt but many alleyways, courtyards (old and new) and driveways are in more sympathetic materials – old sandstone setts, granite setts and new concrete setts and paviors provide an interesting surface and have been used effectively in old and new developments. Pavements are a mixture of York stone and concrete paving as well as asphalt. Despite – or because of - their heavy use they are not in good condition with many broken slabs.

There are a number of footpaths between the centre of the village and outlying areas. A few are still well used but many have been disrupted by construction of the by-pass, new housing or the golf course and their value as recreational walks reduced as a result.



Highway and Access Guidelines

- Good and safe access for pedestrians and cyclists must be provided both to and within the village centre and to both schools. Provision of cycle stands in High Street should be investigated.
- Traffic calming measures should be investigated to give pedestrians priority in residential areas and the commercial centre.
- Additional off-street parking may be required but encouragement of a more sustainable approach to car use by local people should be adopted.
- No development should take place that would require new access points destroying the important streetscenes. Where possible the “alleyways and archways” approach should be utilised, employing surfacing materials of setts or paviors.
- Paths to and around the centre for those on foot and cycle must be safe, clean and welcoming to encourage greater use. The network of rural footpaths should be retained, well maintained and clearly waymarked.

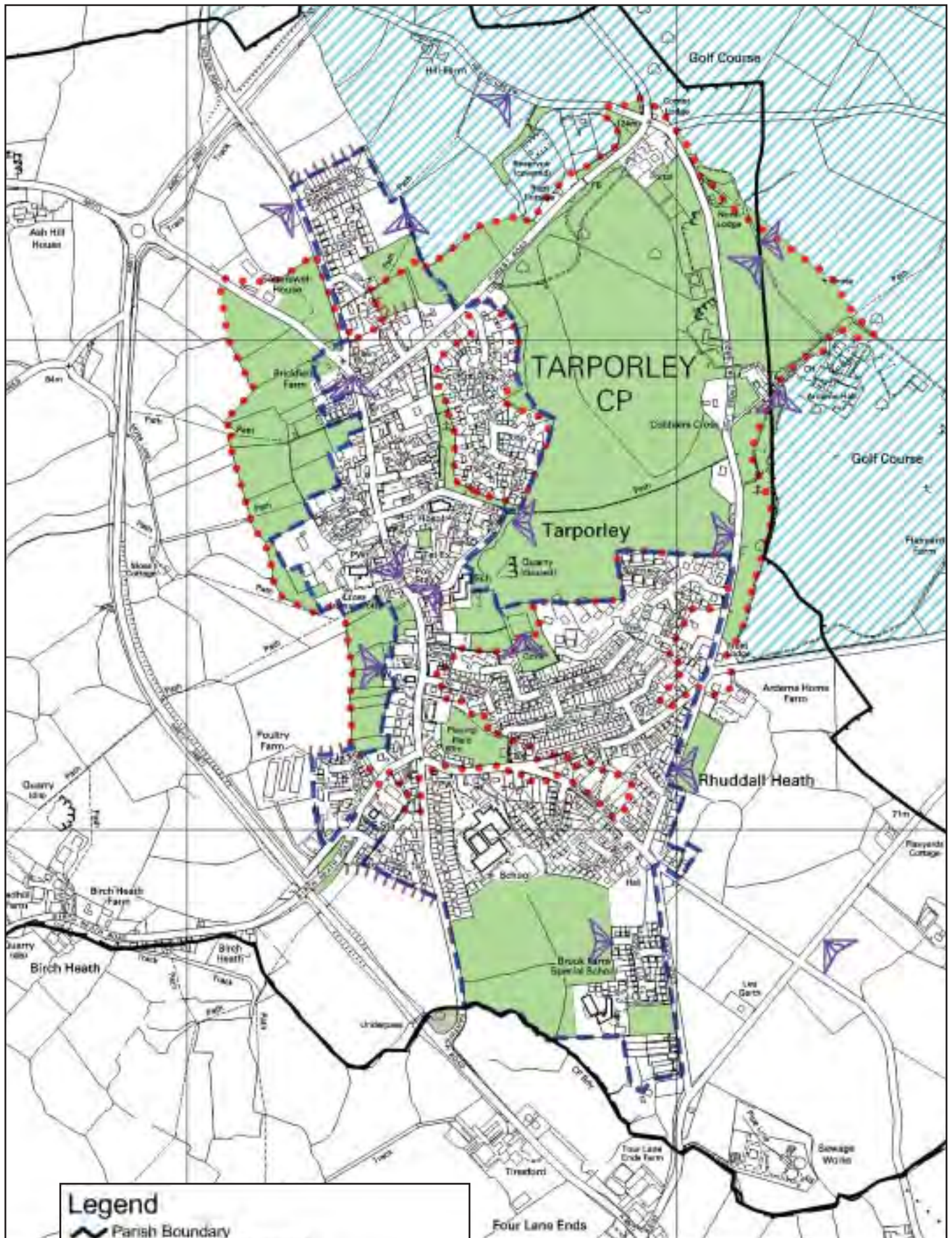


8. The Way Forward

To sustain the visual harmony and distinctive character of Tarporley means:

- **Protecting the valued characteristics and buildings, open spaces and links with the surrounding countryside**
- **Conserving and enhancing the attractive and historic High Street and its setting**
- **Promoting the character of Tarporley in new development whether this be new buildings or changes to existing ones**
- **Ensuring the retention and provision of smaller, affordable houses for local people**
- **Reducing traffic congestion and encouraging walking and cycling**
- **Developing innovative ways to increase the sense of community and provide a strong identity**
- **Ensuring the existing policy boundary is maintained.**

In order to maintain the many unique features of the village, valued by residents old and young, it is essential that development be carried out sympathetically and in accordance with the guidelines in this Village Design Statement.



Legend

- Parish Boundary
- Local Plan Policy Boundary
- Conservation Area Boundary
- Village Edges to be "softened" into Landscape
- Important Open Spaces and Tree Belts
- Area of Special County Value for Landscape
- Key Viewpoints

Scale 1:10000

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