Oldbury on Severn Parish Council

Oldbury-on-Severn Village Character Assessment

Version 5 December 2018 (Final)

Table of Contents

1- INTRODUCTION..... 3

2- BRIEF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY 4

3- LANDSCAPE SETTING OF OLDBURY-ON-SEVERN 5

4- SETTLEMENT FORM 6

5- NATURE OF THE BUILT FORM 11

6- MASSING AND DENSITY..... 13

7- GUIDELINES FOR LOCATION, DENSITY AND LANDSCAPING OF DEVELOPMENT 13

8- ROADS & TRAFFIC 14

9- OPEN SPACE IN THE VILLAGE..... 14

Acknowledgements

This Study and report has been produced by the Oldbury-on-Severn Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Working Group in collaboration with Liz Beth of LB Planning.
It will be available for comment during the Regulation 14 Consultation and forms an evidence base and reference document for that plan.

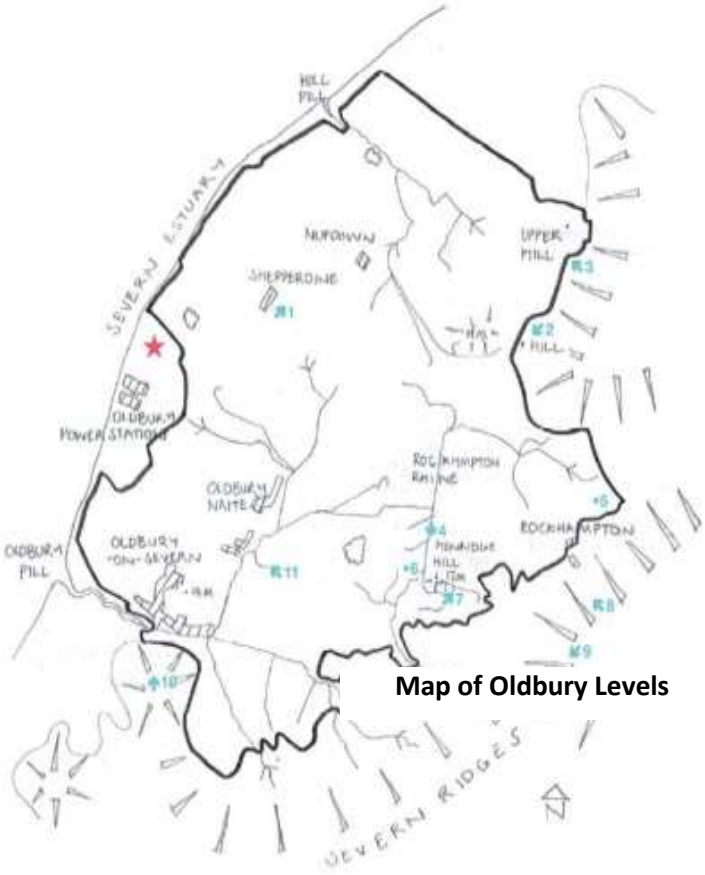
1- Introduction

1.1 Oldbury-on-Severn is a village of some 780 people (Census 2011) in a rural setting in South Gloucestershire. It is located in the Oldbury Levels on the banks of the River Severn approximately 20 miles from both the centre of Gloucester and Bristol. It has key essential services including a village shop and School, and other community facilities including a church, pub and memorial hall.

1.2 Oldbury-on-Severn is a historic village and the primary Economic activities in the Parish are farming and the Power Station, although there are a number of small businesses covering mechanical & electrical engineering, tyres and exhausts and building.

1.3 In the central area of the village, there is relatively little communal green space, with just the triangular Pound with the war memorial, and a small area outside and next to the village shop. A small Village Green is sited at Westend .

Throughout the village older buildings are built mostly in the local stone and in a traditional style. Any recent developments have been in a more modern style although generally stone and render. Any development in the village should pay regard to the existing form of the village, and the guidance in the Appraisal on traditional building styles is also relevant for development in Oldbury Parish generally, in order that the local distinctiveness is promoted and preserved.



Map of Oldbury Levels

1.4 The Character Assessment survey work was mostly carried out on 5th June 2018, a cloudy but dry day with reasonable visibility. Members of the neighbourhood planning group were assisted by Planning Aid in this work, and we used the methodology based on the BANES settlement assessment to direct our work . This document is our evidence for policies in the Oldbury-on-Severn Neighbourhood Plan that requires future residential development to protect and enhance the existing unique and distinct village character.

2- Brief Social and Economic History

2.1 The oldest parts of Oldbury (the name means 'the old settlement') are, to the south, the church hill and, to the north, the hill fort known locally as the Toot, where Iron Age pottery has been found. Roman coins and pottery have been found in both places, and also evidence of a relatively high-status Roman settlement near the present power station.

2.2 The Severn provided fish, wildfowl and on the area liable to flood rich alluvial deposits for farming. The Romans began the flood defences, vital to this day, both against the phenomenal high tides in the river and against freshwater flooding from inland. In the middle ages Oldbury and its surrounding area formed the Marsh tithing (the name is significant) of Thornbury manor.
A mill was constructed on the site of the present Anchor pub. The high tide then, and until recently, came right up into the village, and was held back to be used as required to work the mill.

2.3 Fishing with 'fixed engines' (rows of trumpet-shaped baskets made of hazel and willow), or with lave nets, was until recently a useful source of food and income, ended by a combination of increasing bureaucracy (including ever-rising licence fees) and the shifting mud and sand of the river bed.

2.4 Oldbury has its own saint, St Arilda, who lived and died at the well bearing her name at Kington. The church has magnificent views from its circular churchyard, itself evidence of a pre-Norman conquest.

The Church of St Arilda

2.5 The Parish accommodates several businesses covering mechanical and electrical engineering, tyres, agriculture, livery, garden machinery, builder's merchants, woodworking, self-storage and small business units. The village has a significant number of people working at or from home, about 25% of the economically active.

2.6 The centre of the Village is marked by the War Memorial and the Old Methodist Chapel (no longer consecrated).

3- Landscape setting of Oldbury-on-Severn

3.1 Oldbury is situated on the banks of the River Severn approximately 20 miles north-west of the centre of Bristol and 25 miles south-south-west of Gloucester. It is within Landscape Character Area 19 of the South Gloucestershire Landscape Character Assessment. It is described as "an undulating, low-lying landscape of mixed, predominantly pastoral agriculture and small stone-built villages, centred on the small town of Thornbury and bordered by the Severn Estuary to the west and north and east by higher land". Oldbury is surrounded by farmland on all sides with small fields bounded by hedges, and in places this farmland comes into the village. The geology of this area is predominantly Alluvial, with Alluvial Gley soils, peats and occasional Alluvial gravel fans, the topography generally lies at or below 10 metres a.o.d with some higher land up to 14 metres a.o.d. A defining physical element of this area is the sea wall defences to the west and a complex pattern of drainage ditches, locally called rhines.

3.2 The core of the village is at about 8m AOD, on a slightly undulating site in the Severn valley. There is a gentle rise north to Camp Road and the ancient Toot which is about 14m AOD and an 39m AOD rounded knoll to the south of the village on which sits Saint Arilda's Church. The River Severn flows immediately to the west of the village, with a historically important crossing point at Whale Wharf. The course of the river is wide and straight, bounded by meadows, in a fairly narrow flood plain. Historically the river supported a number of industries e.g. water mills, brick making using coal brought across the river from the Forest of Dean and fishing.

4- Settlement Form

4.1 Oldbury is a dispersed settlement with linear development spread along several lanes that intersect in the centre of the village. Buildings are mostly spaced well apart, with surrounding gardens and trees. Many properties back onto open fields. In terms of area it is one of the largest Parishes in South Gloucestershire but has one of the smallest population's, The settlement boundary defining the village itself is small by comparison (see Oldbury Parish Map below) , less than 50% of dwellings in the Parish are sited there.

4.2 There are three key distinctive forms to the existing village of Oldbury (see pages 8-10), the **'vintage village'** has buildings clearly visible behind stone wall frontages, neat hedges and well-tended front gardens .

Lanes leading into the village and much of the village itself can be characterised as **'leafy lanes '**often used in combination with stone walls. Here properties are more likely to be surrounded by vegetation, and often somewhat hidden from the road by hedges and trees.

Aerial View of Oldbury

View to the River from the Churchyard

Finally, on the route out of the village to the south, towards the hamlets of Cowhill and Kington, the school and then the church are two significant landmark buildings, on the only hill in the parish (39m a.o.d.) . The church has spectacular views, something not often noted in the village, this area of Church and School could be seen as a third area – **'heritage hill'** important but slightly outside the main village settlement.

'Vintage Village'
Extensive use of stone and hedging to form dwelling boundaries

Westend Lane – Camp Road

Westmarsh Lane

Camp Road

Camp Road - Westend

Chapel Road

'Leafy Lanes'

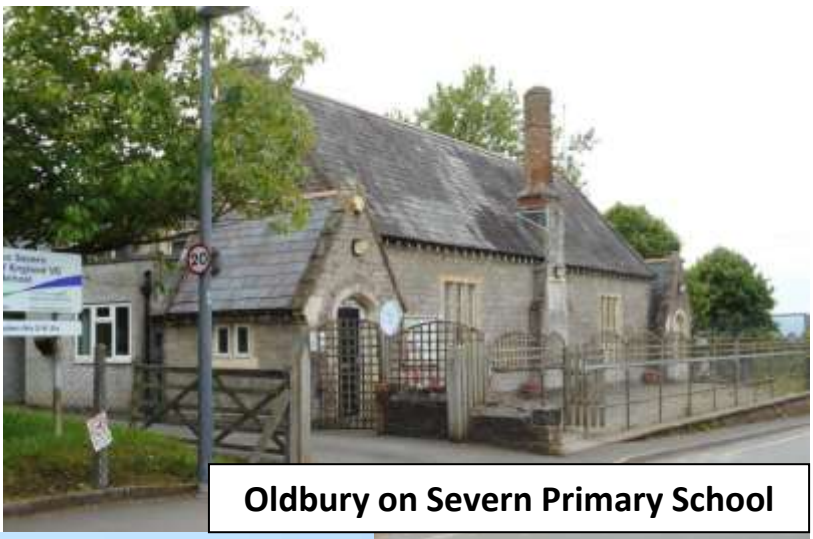
Hedgerows managed and natural used to designate dwelling boundaries and integrate with pasture land

Camp Road

Westend Lane

Featherbed Lane

'Heritage Hill'



Oldbury on Severn Primary School

Church Road

The Vicarage - Church Road

5- Nature of the built form

5.1The landscape character assessment for the Oldbury Levels (LCA19) acknowledges that there is relatively little settlement in the area and that Oldbury is a linear settlement strung out along a number of narrow lanes.

The Pound

5.2 Development in the village is low density and scattered, mostly well set in surrounding vegetation and has a relaxed and gentle feel. Apart from the school and church on the hill there are not many landmarks, and those there are are understated – the telephone box for example stands out. Most buildings are two storeys, with sloping roofs. Materials for the elevations are mixed, throughout the village – a feature really. Render next to stone cottages, some render with stone detail, occasionally a red brick building.

Density varies at different locations around the village. On the South Side of the Village there are a range of properties ranging from terraced to substantial detached.

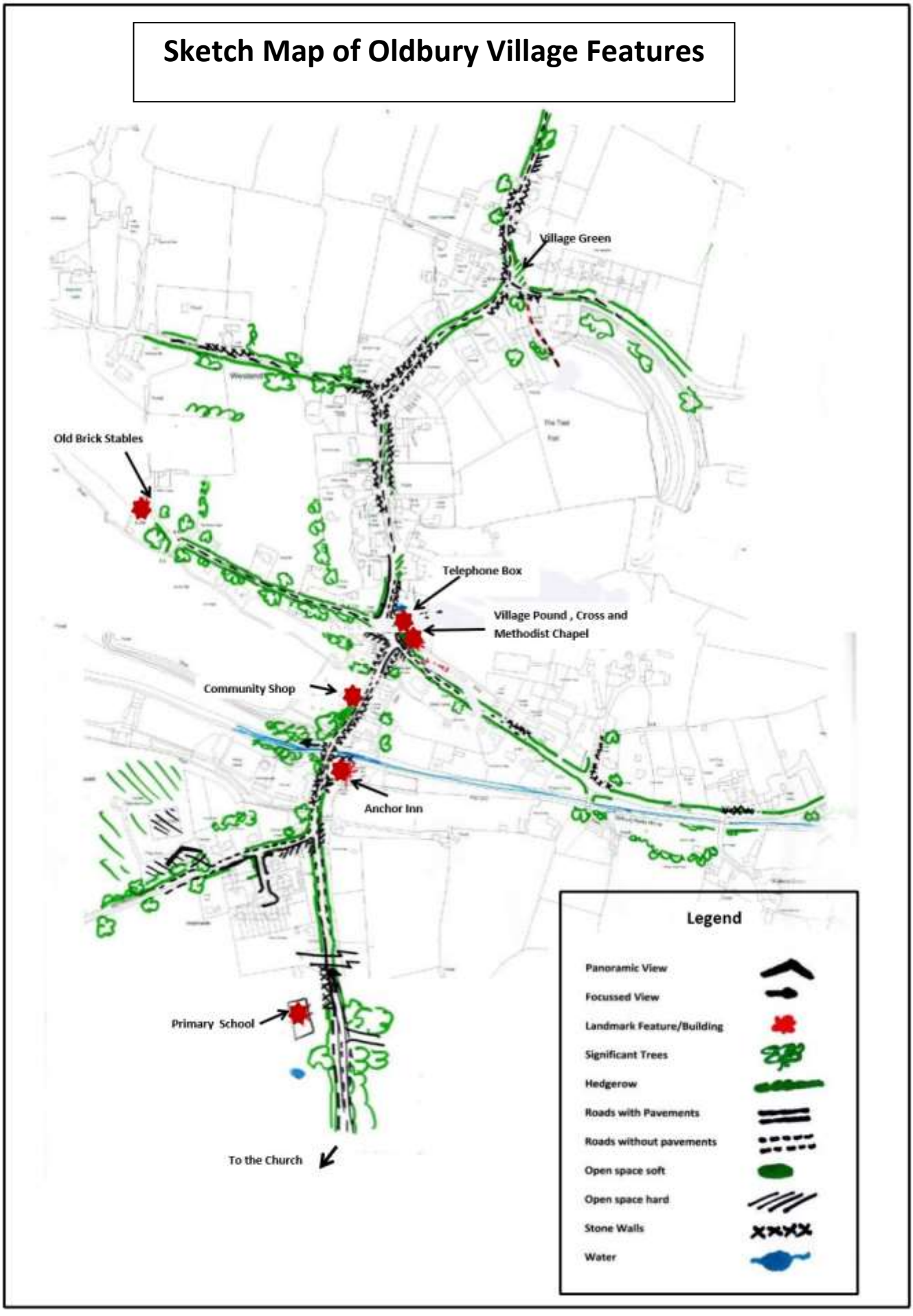
The area around Westmarsh Lane in particular demonstrates this.

There are 25 houses located within a 2.5 ha envelope (including infrastructure).Calculated simply this is an average of 0.1 ha per dwelling. However different densities are incorporated in the area, more detailed analysis indicates that 20 of those dwellings stand in 0.78 ha equivalent to 0.039 ha per dwelling. This is more characteristic of the area and represents a density of 25/26 per ha.

The area on Church Road is predominantly detached properties enjoying an average of .089 ha per dwelling.

At the North end of the Village a similar picture exists although on average the semidetached properties in Westend enjoy 0.052 ha per dwelling. The larger detached dwellings in Camp Road are on average sited in plots of 0.1ha

Sketch Map of Oldbury Village Features



6- Massing and Density.

In order to maintain the character and distinguishing attributes of the village, development will be expected to follow the dispersed settlement form based on the existing lanes. New development must integrate with existing patterns with well related density , scale and massing. This complies with the spirit and intent of para 125 of the NPPF (March 2018)

7- Guidelines for Location, Density and Landscaping of Development

These guidelines embrace the spirit and intent of Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy and seek to promote good design in all development within the parish, proportionate in scale and in accordance with the vision, objectives and policies of the Oldbury on Severn Neighbourhood Plan.

G1 Development should be low density and primarily of a linear nature to match existing rural village areas . The density of new development should not exceed 25 dwellings to the hectare unless the dwellings are small and include affordable housing , in which case a density of 30 dwellings to the hectare is acceptable .

G2 Development in the Leafy Lanes areas should maintain wherever possible existing trees and hedgerows and continue to use extensive soft landscaping and tree planting to soften the lines of buildings and their setting .

G3 Development in the village needs to be of a similar scale to existing buildings and not detract from or obscure important views and landmark buildings in the village.

G4Dwellings should have garden space and off road parking provided within their curtilage.

G5 Boundary treatments in the Vintage Village areas should be predominantly stone walls, and existing stone walls and other traditional features should be retained in all development. Hedgerow boundaries and other soft landscaping will normally be more appropriate in the Leafy Lane areas.

G6 Development needs to present a varied appearance, while using traditional materials of stone , brick and some render as the main palette . Development can mix single and two storey dwellings to achieve the varied and informal appearance and satisfy the needs of the local inhabitants.

G7 These guidelines are not intended to prevent innovative good modern design proportionate to the village and its context.

G8 Where external lighting is considered essential for safety or other reasons , it should use low powered LED fittings or shade lights so as to avoid light pollution and spill and to ensure no adverse impact on wildlife.

8- Roads & Traffic

8.1 Most roads do not have formal pavements and are a shared surface for vehicles and other users. This is an important visual attribute of the village and should be maintained.

There are some problems identified with heavy and speeding traffic and traffic calming measures are encouraged as long as they respect this crucial aspect of the village character and lanes.

9- Open Space in the Village

9.1 On the south-west side of the village, with an approach down Westmarsh Lane, is the village playing field. This contains a relatively large and level grassy area used for cricket matches, village fetes, etc. There is a fenced-off children's playground on the western side with swings, slides, etc. The playing field has a cricket pavilion to the side, multiuse games with tennis courts and a further pavilion, for use by the public, in particular the Busy Bees Playgroup. This facility is well used by villagers, with a playing field committee looking after it.

Multi Use Games Area

Secure Play Area

9.2 An area to the north of the village, known as the 'Toot' has been designated as a historical monument.

9.3 The village is bounded on 3 sides by an agricultural landscape of fields and hedges, and occasional farm buildings and on the other side by the River Severn. The village lies on slightly undulating land affording views of the surrounding countryside. There are extensive views in all directions from the top of Church Road.