Denstone Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Character & Built Environment Assessment

Final Report – August 2016
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1 Introduction & Purpose

1.1 This Characterisation Study was undertaken by Steering Group (SG) members and local residents. It is considered to be particularly relevant because, in accordance with the principles of Localism and Neighbourhood Planning, it represents a local, community based, input into what might otherwise be an entirely technical process. The work is seen as a critical part of the emerging Denstone Neighbourhood Plan (DNP). The report will be published alongside the DNP as part of the evidence base.

1.2 The approach to the study recognised that it does not need to replicate or duplicate other work (see section 3 below) and therefore, the focus was on the following

- A description of the wider landscape setting of the village and surroundings.
- The physical form of (all) the village and its relationship to the adjoining countryside.
- The “value” of open land within and surrounding the village in terms of; landscape, views, the setting of the village, public benefits, bio-diversity and historic character.

1.3 SCC ran a workshop for the Steering Group in March on approaches to landscape character studies and on the heritage assets present in the plan area. As part of this, the following conclusion were drawn;

- Denstone originated as dispersed settlement pattern; no single settlement core
  Historic maps suggests settlement at Denstone only loosely concentrated along College Road & Oak Road by late 19th century.
- There is a group of Listed institutional buildings on B5031 dating to 1860
- There is 20th century piecemeal development infill on former small orchards/paddocks (creating sense of greater nucleation)
- Built character – mix of historic and modern properties; varied architectural styles and red brick/stone are the main building materials

1.4 In terms of the character of the wider parish, the following features are present:

- Well preserved field pattern enclosed post medieval period (field boundaries and earthworks fossilise their origins as part of a medieval ‘open field’ system)
- Agriculture by 19th century ‘almost entirely devoted to grazing and dairy produce’
- Dispersed settlement pattern (comprising hamlets, scattered farms and cottages) survives across the parish – 84% of surviving historic farmsteads identified as having a ‘High Heritage Potential’ (retaining greater than 50% of their historic plan form).
- Historic farmsteads are present
- What came before this period related to open field agriculture – fossilised in the field pattern of the modern landscape which was probably enclosed piecemeal from the 16th-17th century and ridge and furrow earthworks. Following that paddocks and orchards were developed by late 19th century. In addition, a dairy industry and Uttoxeter as a cheese and butter market developed from 17th century.

1.5 The findings of the study were subject to public consultation with local people and landowners as part of the consideration of locations for new housing development or as part of consultation on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan. The final amendments to the report, including and additional survey of land north and south of Hollis Lane and a more detailed consideration of views were undertaken in February and April 2016.
2 Methodology

2.1 The SCC workshop prompted the Steering group to undertake a full Characterisation Study. A further session was help in June 2015 and a survey was undertaken over the summer by Steering Group (SG) members and local residents. It is considered to be particularly relevant because, in accordance with the principles of Localism and Neighbourhood Planning, it represents a local, community based, input into what might otherwise be an entirely technical process. The work is seen as a critical part of the Neighbourhood Plan. A full report will be published alongside the plan as part of the evidence base. The intention is that the study will:

- Provide a general context for the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan
- Provide evidence for more detailed landscape, environment & heritage policies
- Provide a means to evaluate potential development sites/locations in Denstone village.

2.2 The approach to the study recognised that it does not need to replicate or duplicate other work and therefore, the focus was on the following

- A description of the wider landscape setting of the village and the wider Parish.
- The physical form of (all) the village and its relationship to the adjoining countryside.
- The “value” of open land within and surrounding the village in terms of; landscape, views, the setting of the village, longer views public benefits, bio-diversity and historic character.

2.3 The methodology has been adopted from Oxford and Planning Aid England Character Assessment Toolkits, based on proven community based assessment which has been used successfully in other Neighbourhood Plans. This looks at;

PHYSICAL CHARACTER

STREETS/ROADS (type of street – narrow, wide, straight, winding, street furniture)
SPACE & BOUNDARIES (means of enclosure/boundaries, sense of space (open/ intimate) – can be affected by the position of buildings/boundaries and the roadway), presence and size of building plots/gardens, location of buildings within the plot etc.
BUILDINGS (Use (public/domestic etc.), materials, size, scale, form (detached, terraced), density, frontage onto street (orientation); windows, doors, condition, visible alterations)
GREENERY & LANDSCAPE FEATURES (presence and scale of greenery; public/private; rural/urban; mature; changing levels)
VIEWS within the space/street/area (long or short, intimate, channelled, wide), focal points, streetscape (how the buildings and streets work together), roofscape; sense of uniformity)
VIEWS beyond the space/street/area

EMOTIONAL, PERSONAL & TRANSITORY PERCEPTIONS:

ASSOCIATIONS (Buildings of particular historical or other association)
LIGHT/DARK: (Shading, time of day/night, weather conditions)
NOISE & SMELL: Man made/natural

2.4 In addition to survey work, the study has included related pieces of work which have helped to inform and provide data for this assessment, these are;

- Natural England - National Character Areas Profiles (NCA 64 Potteries & Churnet Valley).
- The Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership (CVLLP)
2.3 The areas are listed below and shown on a map.

1 - Bounded by B5031 (Quixhill Lane) and B5030 and including Doveleys.
2 - Oak Road and Alton Lane.
3 - College Road (Alton Road to Hollis Farm), Narrow Lane, Linden Closes, St Chads close, Croftsted Ave, Marlpit Lane (south) and Alton Road.
4 - Marlpit Lane from junction with Narrow Lane.
5 - Denstone College campus.
6 - Stubwood.
7 - Quixhill & Prestwood.
8 – Land North & South of Hollis Lane.
3 Related Studies

3.1 As noted in section 2, there are three related pieces of work which have helped to inform and provide data for this assessment, these are;

- Natural England - National Character Areas Profiles (NCA 64 Potteries & Churnet Valley).
- The Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership (CVLLP)

3.2 Historic Environment Character Assessment: East Staffordshire (by SCC August 2013).

The following extracts are taken from this important piece of work.

7.3.2 Denstone Settlement/Built Character

7.3.2.1 It is clear from historic mapping that by at least the late 18th century Denstone was a dispersed settlement laid out along a network of lanes, the framework of which survives in the extant Alton Road, Oak Road, College Road, Marlpit Lane and Narrow Lane (plate 1). Historic maps suggest that the current B5031, aligned roughly north-south to the east of the extant settlement was constructed between 1775 and the mid 19th century. The pattern of the development of Denstone, and its dispersed nature, has meant that no single settlement core can be identified. Yates’ map (1775), which supplies only an indication of settlement location and density, suggests that the key settlement focal points lay along College Road and Oak Road, and it is along these two roads where most properties stood by the late 19th century. The earliest known property is the Grade II Listed Stone House a detached early 18th century house standing on the north side of College Road. The reason for Denstone’s lack of a focal point is probably due to its status from at least the medieval period as a hamlet lying within the large parish and manor of Alton (lying to the north-west). Denstone is mentioned in Domesday Book (1086), although no details are given, it being described as ‘waste’ being held by the King, as was Alton at this date. A settlement certainly existed at Denstone by the 13th century, although its form and focus is currently unknown. In 1860 Denstone was established as an ecclesiastical parish and a group of institutional buildings, including All Saints Church, a vicarage (both Grade II* Listed), a National School and a church hall (Grade II Listed), were constructed in the 1860s as a result. This group of buildings lies along the western side of the B5031, on the periphery of the modern main settlement, and just to the west of the Churnet Valley. They form a linear development and presumably represent an attempt to form a focal point to the settlement. Their importance is magnified by the fact that they were all designed in a gothic revival style by the eminent architect G. E. Street. The architect also designed the lych gate and a churchyard cross as well as the stable and coach house for the vicarage (all of which are Grade II Listed). Their presence is also testimony to the philanthropy of Sir Thomas Percival Haywood. This investment may be seen as an Anglican response to the buildings designed by A. W. N. Pugin at Alton Castle for the lord of the manor (which included Denstone), the Earl of Shrewsbury, in the 1840s. The economy, by the late 19th century, was also reliant upon market gardening or fruit growing (orchards) in the fields between properties. It is in these areas that the 20th century expansion of Denstone has occurred. Along the historic lanes, 20th century houses were built piecemeal and reveal a range of architectural styles, although the majority are detached. Small housing estates, set within short cul-de-sacs, are also a feature particularly between College Road and Alton Road, as well as to the west of the B5031 (south of the junction with College Road). These areas are represented by a higher proportion of semi-detached houses. Map 18 reveals the areas where the highest concentration of ‘Pre 1880s Settlement’ and
‘Post 1880s Settlement’ lies at Denstone. However, because of its previously dispersed settlement pattern individual historic buildings survive among the newer properties and contribute to the local character of the village. The majority of the historic buildings are of brick and probably date to the 18th/19th century; the exception to this character is the Grade II Listed Stone House (see above), which as its name suggests is built of stone.

Historic Character of the Hinterland

7.3.2.2 Denstone is surrounded by a well-preserved field system which was enclosed during the post medieval period and which exhibits evidence of its origins as part of the village’s medieval open field system (cf. 5.3.1). The extant field pattern, shown as ‘Piecemeal Enclosure’ on map 18, was created incrementally through the gradual enclosure of open fields and is identifiable by the morphology of the field boundaries which exhibit either a reverse ‘S’ curve (fossilising the line of the medieval plough) or as dog-legs. The evidence for open fields also survives in the form of ridge and furrow earthworks which have been identified in the landscape around Denstone, but particularly to the south and north-west. The enclosure of open fields during the post medieval period represents a move away from communal farming and towards the creation of individual holdings and often a change towards a more pastoral economy. By the 19th century the land around Denstone was “almost entirely devoted to grazing and dairy produce”80. It is likely that Denstone’s reliance on cattle began in the 17th century and formed part of an agricultural movement which was concentrated in the Dove Valley, approximately 2km to the east, and focused upon the market town of Uttoxeter. The pattern of dispersed settlement survives across the wider landscape with many small historic farmsteads, although four are also located within Denstone itself. Many of these small farmsteads were probably established in the post medieval period as part of the creation of individual holdings following the enclosure of the open fields, although some may have had medieval antecedents. The majority originated with plan forms suggestive of incremental (unplanned) development and a number are well preserved or largely retain their original plan forms. The line of the disused Churnet Valley branch line of what had once been the London and North Western Railway is well preserved within the landscape as well as within Denstone itself. The railway was opened in 1849, but passenger trains were withdrawn in 1965 and goods trains not long after81. The section of the line between Denstone and Oakamoor (to the north-west) now forms a public footpath/cycleway. The railway station, which once stood off College Road, has since been demolished but the platform remains as a feature. The line of the railway through Denstone also fossilises the earlier route of the Caldon Canal.

7.3.2.3 Potential for unknown Heritage Assets Little is currently known about the wider landscape around Denstone in the prehistoric or Roman period, although this is likely to be a result of limited fieldwork and study rather than evidence of the absence of past activity (cf. 5.2). The archaeological potential is likely to be high within the area given its location adjacent to the Dove and Churnet valleys, the confluence of these rivers lying 3km to the south of the village. Rocester, which originated as a Roman fort and settlement, lies 1.75km to the south east.

In addition, the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment, Planning For Landscape Change, provides a more fine grained assessment than the National Character Area Profile, describing the majority of the Parish as falling within the character type Dissected Sandstone Uplands (subtype Farmland) in Potteries and Churnet Valley. A summary is provided below.
**Visual character**

This is a landscape of small to medium scale, low intensity pastoral farming where an intact hedgerow pattern and large numbers of hedgerow trees dictate visual enclosure and limit views. The undulating landform does however show up the field pattern and allow distant views, particularly where farm intensification has locally increased the scale. Localised variations in landform, particularly small-scale valley features, and increased tree cover combine to foreshorten views and reduce the apparent scale in other places so that parts of the landscape remain hidden from view.

Variations in vegetation cover influence the individual character of different areas; tree species are predominantly oak and ash, with sycamore being more dominant on higher ground. Hedgerow maintenance is variable, from well-trimmed, giving the appearance of smooth lines across the landscape, to gappy with grown up individual thorn and holly trees. There is very little apparent visual difference between the hedged areas and smaller areas of stone walls, but fences are increasingly being introduced for stock control.

The ancient character of this landscape is strongly reinforced by the dispersed settlement pattern and winding sunken nature of the numerous small lanes. Isolated old brick and sandstone farms and individual cottages are beginning to appear run down, with derelict old farming machinery increasingly associated with the properties.

Although there is little within this landscape to indicate its closeness to adjacent highland fringes, gradual increases in stone walls in some areas, the pronounced rolling nature of the landform and the introduction of stone as a building material, together with distant views of the higher ground, are gentle reminders of the transitional position these landscapes occupy between the highlands and lowlands.

**Characteristic landscape features**

Small to medium scale field pattern of hedgerows with some introduction of stone walls; hedgerow trees; strongly undulating landform with small stream valleys; low intensity pasture farming; a dispersed pattern of settlements linked by small sunken lanes; red brick and stone buildings.’

The following maps are taken from the County Council Heritage Environment Record
3.3 **Natural England - National Character Areas Profiles** (NCA 64 Potteries & Churnet Valley) (NB views into the White Peak NCA 53 which includes the Weaver Hills are important). The following extracts are taken from this important piece of work

**Summary**

Located in North Staffordshire, the landscape of Potteries and Churnet Valley National Character Area (NCA) exhibits a strong contrast between the industrialised landscape of the Potteries and the pastoral, strongly dissected hills and small plateaux that flank the Churnet and Dove valleys. Natural resources associated with the Coal Measures enabled industrial development leading to the settlement patterns of the Potteries, which form a large conurbation. There is a rich industrial heritage associated with manufacturing, particularly of pottery and the mining of coal, clay, minerals and metal ores, which contributes strongly to the sense of place.

The north and eastern boundary of the NCA rises to meet the limestone landscape of the White Peak and South West Peak NCAs with panoramic vistas of a transitional landscape from lowland to upland. To the south-east, there is a less abrupt transition where the Dove Valley forms an approximate boundary with the Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands. Several country parks and Registered Parks and Gardens such as Alton Towers and Trentham Gardens are popular tourist destinations and the gorge-like character around Alton earned it the local name ‘little Switzerland’. In contrast, quieter recreation can be found along the canals, in the many wooded stream valleys or cloughs, and along the extensive footpath network. The NCA has a diversity of running and still water habitats, ranging from deep, fast-flowing rivers and their tributaries, to riffles and scour ponds, subsidence pools and numerous small ponds. Rudyard Lake reservoir and Westport Lake are the largest open waterbodies. The River Trent rises within the Potteries before flowing out into the Trent Valley Washlands NCA, while the Churnet flows south-east to join the Dove which then joins the Trent to finally discharge into the Humber Estuary.

Exemplifying the wooded character of the NCA, the Churnet Valley and Coombes Valley Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) represent the largest remaining concentration of high quality semi-natural ancient woodland in Staffordshire. The woods are especially rich in invertebrate species – over 30 species of beetle – and an assemblage of priority woodland bird species, including tree pipit, redstart, wood warbler and pied flycatcher, with dippers frequently seen along the watercourses. On the steep slopes of the valleys, woodland often encloses small, ancient wood pastures, rich in flora. Hedgerow banks, sunken lanes and squatter enclosures add to the sense of enclosure, while parklands with their designed landscapes offer views across the wider area. Visitor pressure at tourist destinations is likely to increase, exacerbating traffic congestion and increasing pollution, placing further pressure on the built and natural environments.

The demand for land to accommodate development growth, mineral extraction and tourism is also likely to continue, further fragmenting habitats, but also providing opportunities for
greenspace within urban areas. There are opportunities to use the extensive network of historic transport routes for recreation and as a sustainable transport solution.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Manage, expand, link and buffer the characteristic semi-natural woodland and protect the ancient woodland, for example in the Churnet Valley, reducing habitat fragmentation to benefit landscape character, biodiversity, resource protection and regulation; and enhancing the recreational and experiential qualities of the NCA.

SEO 2: Protect and manage the rivers, streams and springs to enhance the riverine character of the many valleys and cloughs to protect the quality of water from diffuse pollution to benefit biodiversity; and expand riparian habitats to mitigate flood events and to improve the experiential qualities of the NCA.

SEO 3: Manage and expand areas of characteristic unimproved grassland pastures in the Churnet Valley and heathland and moorland of the Staffordshire Moorlands, reducing habitat fragmentation and restoring traditional boundary features to benefit landscape character, sense of place, biodiversity and resource protection while enhancing the recreational and experiential qualities of the NCA.

SEO 4: Protect and manage historic landscape character and associated heritage assets that include the historic transport network and industrial heritage and improve the understanding of its intrinsic links with geodiversity; and find sustainable solutions to manage visitor pressure at popular attractions, for example Alton Towers and Trentham Gardens, thus supporting the tourist economy and maintaining a high level of public access to enjoy the wealth of recreational experience that the NCA offers.

3.4 The Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership (CVLLP).

This is enabling a portfolio of projects to create long term environmental and social benefits for the Churnet Valley, Staffordshire. The vision is to enhance, both physically and in the minds of our people, the Churnet Valley as an asset to actively celebrate and enjoy. The programme is focussing on the most treasured landscapes and heritage, supporting communities and organisations with local initiatives to boost the conservation, management and knowledge of our natural landscape and built heritage. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) announced support of £1.89 million for the Churnet Valley through HLF’s Landscape Partnership programme in 2012. Work commenced in October 2012 and last four years.

The overarching objective of the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership is to secure the heritage of the valley. The woodlands, grasslands and boundary features of the Churnet Valley are considered important heritage elements that need to be restored and conserved. The portfolio of projects aims to:

- enable local communities to rediscover and engage with local heritage.
- address threats posed by erosion, farming decline, invasive species, loss of habitat, footpath and towpath disrepair and lack of maintenance of the built heritage
- boost the social economy with initiatives such as training schemes for young people

A key objective is to link heritage to socio-economic wellbeing, focusing on enabling:
- Community and industry awareness of the holistic importance of heritage
- Community involvement in managing and maintaining their local heritage
- Increased skills and knowledge, allowing the community and industry to provide economic benefits from the maintenance and conservation of heritage.

By the end of the project period the target is to have significantly reversed the rate of decline across the landscape by increasing habitat connectivity and the condition of representative built heritage features. Under the Memorandum of Understanding each partner has agreed to pursue projects and initiatives under the following heritage headings:

- **Conserve** - *(conserve and enhance)* Conserve or restore the built and natural features that create the historic landscape character of the Churnet Valley.
- **Participate** – *(community participation)* Increase community participation in the local heritage of the Churnet Valley
- **Learn and experience** *(access and learning)* Increase access to and learning about the Churnet Valley landscape and its heritage
- **Engage & sustain** *(heritage skills training)* Increasing training in local heritage skills.

**Maintenance of heritage**

At a landscape level the Churnet Valley Living Landscape Partnership will look to achieve sustained maintenance of the heritage of the Churnet Valley by:

- creating an economically sustainable solution to woodland management aimed to support good woodland management within the valley for many years ahead;
- assist landowners and managers into funded support programmes for landscape management, most of which require a commitment of ten years or more;
- train people in the skills required to maintain heritage features such as dry stone walls so that the community is equipped to participate in the maintenance of its own heritage.

**Programme A: Conserve built and natural features**

CV LLP 1: Sustainable Woodland
CV LLP 2: Grasslands Conservation Adviser
CV LLP 3: Headwaters
CV LLP 4: Boundary Repair and Restoration
CV LLP 5: Canal Vegetation
CV LLP 6: Railway Heritage
CV LLP 7a & b: Bridge 70
CV LLP 8: Churnet Valley Milestone and Mile Markers
4 Area Assessments by SG members and local residents.

4.1 The surveys used a pro forma summary to assemble survey information in a consistent manner. Individuals and pairs (of varied age group, gender and address) carried out the surveys to provide independent assessments of the characteristics of the defined areas of the village. This extensive list of characteristics was then summarised for each area to describe the positives and negatives of each area and highlight the prominent features. Appendix 1 is a copy of the master assessment form and those (with photographs) completed by the team are in Appendix 4 (this is lengthy and is presented separately).

4.2 The following paragraphs provide a summary of each of the areas and a conclusion, in italics, of the suitability (or not) of new large scale development for that location.

1 – Area bounded by B5031 (Quixhill Lane) and B5030 and including Doveleys.

4.3 The roads (B5013, B503. & Quixhill Lane) although they well-used, are rural in character and the offer longer views to the Weaver Hills and they show the rural setting of Denstone village, despite the proximity of the JCB complex and Rocester. The wide valley of the River Churnet is an important landscape feature. There is a mixture of houses: the more recent properties tend to be large and although good quality using brock with blue tiled roofs, are a little generic. Older 1950s houses, (e.g. off Hawthorn Close -which are predominantly semis) have a planned feel with consistent materials, layout, plots sizes etc.). The older properties, (the old school, All Saints Church and Denstone Hall Farm) have historic and heritage interest with stone as well as brick. These buildings are large and sit in extensive grounds.

The main planning issues in Area 1 are:

- The importance of longer views to the Weaver Hills.
- The importance of the open landscape of the river valley and the way in which it helps to keep Denstone separate from JCB and Rocester
- Consistent design in the small (planned) 1950’s estate.
- The heritage value of the area including the hall, the old school and the Church.
- The tendency for new houses to be large detached units.

2 - Oak Road and Alton Lane

4.4 The section of College Road from the old railway line to its junction with Alton Road which is at the heart of the village, contains some of its most and some less attractive features. It is cluttered with street furniture and signage for the roundabout, traffic-calming and the school. This is coupled with the three noticeboards, the two bus shelters, the grit bin, rubbish bin and street lighting. The village hall, although serving a tremendously useful function, has an impact as does the large car park. However, the war memorial and the fountain enhance the area, as do the bowling green and the entrance to the old railway line. There are many trees in gardens, and a field with a stream running through it adjoins the village hall carpark. The road is a mixture of private dwellings and various businesses or public buildings, including a bed-and-breakfast, a shop, a pub, and the village hall.

4.5 As well as old buildings there are new houses, in particular those on the two infill developments of Frances Close and Rowan Close. Houses are generally set some way back from the road. Although there is consistency in the design, there is no uniformity; all dwellings have their own character.

4.6 There is heavy traffic generated by the primary school and Denstone College.
The section of Alton Lane which links College Road with Denstone Lane is narrow with no pavements. The boundary walls or banks of properties are on the road itself. It has an open aspect, with well-maintained individual detached properties, in fairly large plots and attractive gardens. From the junction with Denstone Lane, there are extensive views over open farmland to the hills beyond. In addition, there are fields on both sides of the Denstone Road and extensive open views to the N, E & S. Apart from new development of houses on the site of the old petrol station and Hillcrest Farm, there are no buildings.

The disused railway line runs from the centre of Denstone to Oakamoor, and it is used extensively by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. The two original stone and brick platforms still in place are a local heritage feature. In addition, there are several important older buildings along the railway line and the green corridor is also important for wildlife.

The main planning issues in Area 2 are:

- The importance of longer views to the Weaver Hills.
- The traffic levels associated with the schools and the need for traffic management.
- The value of open spaces (railway line and bowling green) and trees within gardens.
- The heritage value area which including older buildings and the memorial.
- The tendency for new houses, albeit well designed, to be large detached units.

**3 - College Road (Alton Road to Hollis Farm), Narrow Lane, Linden Closes, St Chads close, Croftsted Ave,. Marlpit Lane (south) and Alton Road.**

College Road is characterised by a mixture of dwellings set back from both sides of the road with, generally, mature gardens. The age, style and type of dwelling varies and they are generally detached or semi-detached. Brick is the main building material but colours vary and there is some render. Tiled roofs are the norm. Windows vary in style but frames are generally white. Due to the topography some dwellings are built on the slopes above the road.

The pavement widens to become larger than average, comprising grass with a tarmac path through it. This pavement runs along the south side of the road which, with well cared for mature gardens, large trees and greenery, give a pleasant, open feel to the area - though there are no long views due to the curves in the road. Stone walls are a recurring feature. College Road changes approximately a third of the way along when fields bounded by large trees and shrubbery replace houses to the south. On the north side high hedges and/or trees are a feature with generally, detached dwellings, (houses and bungalows), set back in large front gardens. Infill has been done sympathetically and blends in. Most dwellings are made of brick and tile. Stone walls are again a recurring feature.

From the end of the houses just west of Narrow Lane to Hollis farm the area changes again to one of fields on either side of the road and tall trees and shrubbery bounding the road giving way to hedges allowing a more open feel and providing wider views. There area is distinctively rural. Despite College traffic the road is still narrow and no pavements occur. Hollis Farm is a cluster of buildings including a modern bungalow as well as the brick and tile farmhouse. There are various handed down stories about Oliver’s Green all related to the Civil War.it is therefore an important local heritage feature.

For the first 30 yards, Narrow Lane is a single track road between stone walls and the older properties which bound College Road. Infill and/or extensions are sympathetic to the buildings on College Road. The road then opens up and the area comprising the rest of
Narrow Lane, Linden Close, St Chad’s Close, Croftstead Avenue, and Marlpit Lane appears, as a whole, a relatively homogeneous area. The area is a mixture of bungalows, detached and semi-detached houses. Styles are representative of the time they were built. On the east of Narrow Lane the houses are predominantly semi-detached, built brick with tiled roofs built in the 1960s/70s. They are set back from the road in mature, front gardens.

4.13 Within the development along the west side of Narrow Lane and in Linden Close larger detached houses and a bungalow were built approximately 10 years ago in a different but distinct style with brown window frames, stained garage doors and a more reddish brown brick. Most are again set back from the road. Unlike the 1960/70s development these dwellings do not tend to have chimneys. Further infill, within the development, has taken place within approximately the last 5 years. Three detached bungalows have been built on the south side of Marlpit Lane and 2 on the north side. Despite the estate feel to this area, the rural setting is brought into the area through the presence of Vinewood farmhouse, stone walls, the view of fields looking south from St. Chad’s Close and the extensive views of the Churnet Valley and Weaver Hills from the Marlpit Lane/Alton Road junction.

4.14 Alton Road is characterised by mixed detached dwellings with a converted farm and detached 1960s/70s houses and bungalows on large plots on the east side and recent infill (2008) on the east comprising large detached houses and bungalows set within a close.

*The main planning issues in Area 3 are:*

- The importance of longer views to the Weaver Hills and the Churnet valley.
- The traffic levels associated with the schools and the need for traffic management.
- The landscape value of verges and banks and of trees within gardens.
- The heritage value of older buildings, boundary walls and Oliver’s Green.
- The tendency for new houses, albeit well designed, to be large detached units.
- The potential for further, well designed, infill development.

4 - Marlpit Lane Denstone Lane

4.14 Marlpit Lane is a narrow semi-residential road which turns in to a single track country lane beyond the residential Cul de Sac of The Weavers. Houses are set in large gardens and there and several mature trees. Boundaries are mixed with walls, fences and grass banks. The longer view are limited until the junction with Alton road where there is a wide and long view to the Weaver Hills. The Weavers is a residential street comprising 1960’s houses and bungalows in a regular layout, set either side of the road leading to a turning circle. Brick and tiles are the dominant building materials. The house are set back in deep front gardens.

4.15 Denstone Lane is a busy route leading to the A50. There is development on the south side of the road which is similar in style to The Weavers. The area to the north of the road is predominantly farmland with several single farm complexes. There are extensive views from the road to the north across the open Churnet valley to the Weaver Hills.

4.16 Greenfields is a short residential cul de sac off Denstone Lane with similar semi-detached chalet bungalows built of brick, render and tiled roofs.

*The main planning issues in Area 4 are:*

- The importance of longer views to the Weaver Hills and the Churnet valley.
- The consistent style and design of the 1960’s houses and chalet bungalows
- The landscape value of verges and banks and of trees within gardens.
5 - Denstone College campus

This area comprises the various buildings and facilities of Denstone College which is, in effect a standalone built development of social, economic, historic and landscape significance. The college was established by the Heywood family in the 1870s and the original buildings are brick and stone in the Victorian gothic style. The college is approached up a hill through a tree lined drive. On entering the grounds there are hockey, cricket and football pitches on either side. The original college buildings, straight ahead, are imposing.

The original stone buildings have two symmetrical long wings in the Victorian gothic style. The buildings are three and four storeys and include classrooms and staff and student accommodation. The south facing side of the college and has extensive views to the south west. At the end of the parking area is a nine hole golf course beyond.

To the left of the main entrance road is a cricket pavilion from 1920s, brick with a tiled roof and a 2000s sports pavilion with a corrugated roof. To the right is a 2010s building made of brick with a tiled roof. There are views to the north east of the Weaver Hills.

Expansion of the school facilities has led to a proliferation along the road of single storey buildings with pitched roofs dating from 1920s to present day using different materials. These include classrooms, music school, drill hall and a swimming pool. There are trees large and small together with street furniture in the form of telephone poles. There is also a close of two storey brick detached 1960s family houses with concrete tiled roofs. These have gardens to the rear and garages with flat roofs. The area is surrounded by mature trees which make the houses barely visible from the rest of the school. Behind the swimming pool, there are more classrooms and older buildings part used as staff accommodation. All have pitched roofs and although some are two storey because the ground slopes away these do not stand out above the single storey buildings in 2 above.

To the west of the main buildings there is the 1960s headmaster’s house and a couple of similar age staff bungalows plus some older extensions to the main building. Further to the west are more sports facilities including an all-weather pitch and a recent pavilion.

The main planning issues in Area 5 are:

- The (designated) heritage value of the older college buildings.
- Traffic generation
- The landscape quality of the setting of the College and the grounds, including the entrance avenue.
- Economic benefits
- The importance of longer views north to the Weaver Hills and to the south west.
- The need to enable the continued development of facilities at the College without creating additional environmental and traffic problems.

6 – Stubwood

Stubwood is a hamlet which lies to the south of Denstone, between the village and the JCB complex (in Roclcester). It has a linear form either side of Stubwood lane on rising land access from Stubwood Hollow. This is a narrow lane, with no footpaths. The first properties encountered are a mix of (detached) traditional and modern homes. On the right, the (Listed) Methodist Chapel is a significant heritage and cultural building. At the junction with Taylors Lane there are several traditional cottages and an old red telephone box which is
used as a community information point. Taylors lane has a mix of modern buildings and a terrace of houses. Overall the predominant building material are red brick and Staffordshire blue tiles but there is also some use of local Hollington stone.

Moving south from the cluster of buildings, there are extensive open view to the west, including Denstone College, Hollington and Croxden Abbey. There are also view to the south and east but the JCB complex is dominant in this landscape in terms of the buildings, lighting and industrial activity.

At the junction of Stubwood lane and Hollington Road, there are some modern houses, a care home and a JCB storage area. Towards Hollington, there is a change in the landscape taking place because of the construction of a golf course by JCB.

The main planning issues in Area 6 are:

- The views to the Weaver Hills and the Churnet valley and also to the west.
- The landscape value the countryside.
- The value of designated and local heritage features.
- The use of local building materials.
- The impact of JCB, associated access infrastructure and the proximity of Rcester.

7 – Quixhill & Prestwood

**Quixhill** This is a hamlet to the north of Denstone village across the Churnet valley. It has origins back to 1191 and consists of around half a dozen dwellings situated on and around the junction between Quixhill Lane and Quixhill Bank. These buildings include 2 farms, a bungalow and 2 larger detached houses. All are set back from the road. Both farmhouses are well established buildings built of brick and include outbuildings, whereas the bungalow and houses are all 20th century, set in gardens and also built of brick.

Quixhill Lane is a narrow (mainly single track) rural road, hedged on both sides (interspersed with several mature trees) and bordered by pasture and arable fields. Due to bends in the road and the height of the hedges, visibility down the length of the lane is restricted, but there are open views up and out of the valley towards Denstone and Prestwood. The main road to Denstone from Quixhill is narrow, busy and goes over a small humpback bridge which crosses the River Churnet. Quixhill Lane turns sharp right about 650 meters from the junction and goes steeply uphill to the hamlet of Prestwood. There is a footpath following the entrance to the JCB estate which leads to the River Churnet and the JCB test track.

**Prestwood** is a small, isolated hamlet situated at the top of Quixhill bank which was first recorded in 1197. It consists of several farms and a few houses / cottages, most of which appear to be pre-20th century. The farm houses and outbuildings, houses and cottages are built of either locally quarried sandstone or brick. The hamlet is strung out along Quixhill Lane at a distance of about 500m. A few dwellings are set back off the road up a private driveway, but all are visible from the road. The lane is narrow, hedged on both sides and affords long, open views of the Churnet Valley and the Weaver Hills.

The main planning issues in Area 7 are:

- The importance of views to the Weaver Hills and across the Churnet valley.
- The quality of the rural landscape and the disperse pattern of buildings.
- Tranquillity, despite the presence of the JCB test track and general traffic.
8 - (Land N&S of Hollis Lane)

This is predominantly a rural area consisting of farmland, fields, and the wooded Churnet valley. The views are exceptional, whether short distance across fields or more extensive views across to the Weavers, Alton, and north and south of the Dove Valley. The landscape is undulating SW from Prestwood towards Denstone Lane. Ridge and furrow can be seen.

Most roads (eg Hollis Lane) are narrow, with no footpaths and rural in character with fields behind hedges. At times they are single track roads. The exception is the road between Alton and Ashbourne ie Denstone Lane, which is a busy single carriageway. Hollis Lane is a narrow lane, enclosed by hedges which rises upwards to give extensive views towards Hollington and Croxden to the west and views across to Denstone village and beyond to the east. Denstone College can also be seen from the top of the Lane. As the road ascends, at times, there are embankments or narrow verges containing bluebells as well as other native wildflowers. Trees are interspersed amongst the hedges. Dwellings are farm houses or former farm buildings and public footpaths lead across the fields.

Denstone Lane is a single carriageway which is busy particularly in the Alton Towers season. View looking NW-NE across fields, across Churnet Valley and the Weavers are exceptional and need to be maintained. Farms are, generally, well set back from the road adding to the rural views. A haulage company which is based on one of the farms, to the south of the road, is unobtrusive due to the distance from the road. Hedges and occasional trees line the road, and at places there are verges all adding to the feeling of space.

Farm buildings have often been updated so dating is difficult but they are likely to be older (e.g. Victorian). The occasional more modern building is also interspaced between them. On the south side of Denstone Lane are more modern houses and bungalows in various styles.

Fields are separated by hedgerows and bluebells and other native species of flowers can be seen amongst the hedgerows and verges. Some of the lanes are enclosed whilst others give the feeling of space due to the views but each add to the distinct rural character.

The main planning issues in Area 8 are;

- The importance of views of Churnet Valley area, Dove Valley, Quixhill, Prestwood and the Weaver Hills.
- The quality of the rural landscape and the dispersed pattern of buildings.
- Tranquillity, despite general traffic.
- Enabling continued farm diversification but noting that any buildings should reflect local character and be appropriate to the area.
5 Conclusions

5.1 The study identified the following key characteristics which need to be taken into account in the formulation of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan, including locations for sites for new housing, general design criteria, protecting local open spaces, criteria for considering other development and renewable energy.

- The way in which the countryside reaches into the heart of Denstone village is important.
- Longer views from Denstone to the Weaver Hills and up the Churnet Valley are valued.
- It is important to keep Denstone and Rocester/JCB physically separate.
- There are local design and layout features which should be reflected in new development.

5.2 The surveys have provided a sound basis for the development of policies for the NP but it also show the needs for more technical work on one key aspect. This concerned longer views and it was considered that it would be valuable to undertake further field surveys, mapping and topographic study to define key views and relate these to specific locations where great care will be need with the design of new development or where any larger scale built development is unlikely to be acceptable. The outcome of this additional work is summarised in Appendix 2.

5.3 In addition to this continuing work on mapping and assessing views it was suggested that a list of those buildings and structures which are not designated but are of local interest and important, should be compiled. This could underpin a policy in the NP aimed at protecting and enhancing non designated local heritage assets. The list was compiled through a review of the surveys completed so far and if necessary, new site visits and work with local people and organisations. The outcome of this additional work is summarised in Appendix 4.
Appendix 1 - Assessments sheet Denstone Character Surveys (June 2015)

**STREET/AREA:**

**PHYSICAL CHARACTER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STREET/ROADS</th>
<th>(Hints: type of street – narrow, wide, straight, winding, street furniture)</th>
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<tr>
<th>SPACE and BOUNDARIES</th>
<th>(Hints: means of enclosure/boundaries, sense of space (open/ intimate – can be affected by the position of buildings/boundaries and the roadway), presence and size of building plots/gardens, location of buildings within the plot (is their uniformity?) – does this change?</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUILDINGS</th>
<th>(Hints: Use (public/domestic etc.), materials, size, scale, form (detached, terraced), density, frontage onto street (orientation); windows, doors, condition, visible alterations)</th>
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<tr>
<th>GREENERY &amp; LANDSCAPE FEATURES (e.g. canal)</th>
<th>(Hints: presence and scale of greenery; public/private; rural/urban; mature; changing levels)</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>VIEWS within the space/street/area</th>
<th>(Hints: long or short, intimate, channelled, wide), focal points, streetscape (how the buildings and streets work together), roofscape; sense of uniformity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
**VIEWS beyond the space/street/area**  
(Hints: long/short, high level; obstructions to views – buildings/structures/topography)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>EMOTIONAL, PERSONAL &amp; TRANSITORY PERCEPTIONS:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSOCIATIONS (Buildings of particular historical or other association)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **LIGHT/DARK: (Shading, time of day/night, weather conditions)** |

| **NOISE & SMELL: Man made/natural** |

| **SUMMARY; QUALITIES & ISSUES (related to potential planning & land use policies)** |

Name(s) of surveyors ......................................................................................................................................................

Date & time of survey .......................................................................................................................................................

*(Adapted from the Oxford and Planning Aid England Character Assessment Toolkits)*
Appendix 2 Key Landscape Views

Approach to Key Views - Landscape Character & Built Environment Assessment.

The Landscape Character & Built Environment Assessment study identified the following key characteristics which need to be taken into account in the formulation of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan, including locations for new housing, general design criteria, protecting local open spaces, criteria for considering other development and renewable energy.

- The way in which the countryside reaches into the heart of Denstone village is important.
- Longer views from Denstone to the Weaver Hills and up the Churnet Valley are valued.
- It is important to keep Denstone and Rocester/JCB physically separate.
- There are local design and layout features which should be reflected in new development.

The survey provided a basis for the policies for the NP but it also showed the need for more technical work on one key aspect. This concerns longer views and it was considered that it would be valuable to undertake further field surveys, mapping and topographic study to define key views and relate these to specific locations where great care will be need with the design of new development or where any larger scale built development is unlikely to be acceptable.

The results of the further work are summarised in this report. Views have been identified using desk based and field surveys, taking account of key public locations in the village, including public footpaths, roads/lanes, and gathering places (e.g. the village hall) where there are views over the Churnet Valley, across to the Weaver Hills and into/out of the village. In addition, the higher land and footpaths around the college site have been taken into account. The resultant key views are summarised below and shown on Map 1 and on photographs.

1 From College Road: looking west (across the village hall/shop) to the fields belonging to Oak Farm. This short view is a unique and distinctive feature of the village, bringing the rural setting into the centre. (The fields have remains of denuded ridge and furrow). There are also views of the rural setting of the village from the public footpaths running south from College Road.

2 From B5031 (the entrance to village) looking north-east, across the Churnet Valley. This is an area of undulating and ‘extremely attractive expanse of open countryside’ which provides a distinct and distinguishing character to the village. Similarly, from the B5032 (north of Quixhill Bridge) looking south-east along the Churnet Valley).

3 Long range views across to the Weaver Hills from Denstone Lane (north of Alton Road) looking north and from B5031 (entrance to village). The Weaver Hills are the dominate landscape feature in the area and long range views are a crucial part of the village character.

4 From along the B5032 from the north to the east of the village the views encompassing the fields, treebelts, and open countryside of Quixhill, Prestwood, and leading to the Weaver Hills, is of significant importance to the character of the village.

5 Views from the public footpath running south from Oak Road across the important open land which maintains separation between the village and JCB/Rocester.
6 From the public footpaths around the College site which follow the contour lines and give views across the village and its rural setting.

Other views, in the wider parish are shown on Map 2. They include from Denstone Lane (NE) towards Quixhill Bridge and beyond, from Denstone Lane (east of Alton Road) looking south and from Oak Road (All Saints School) looking north.

In terms of the potential locations for new housing, the following conclusions can be drawn.

View (1) means that development south of College Road, other than immediately around The Croft would not be appropriate.

View (5) means that development larger scale development between Oak Road and the B5031 would not be appropriate, but it would not rule out a small development off Oak Road adjoining existing houses and the barn.

Conversely, although views (2) and (4) are critically important, development on the land to the north of All Saints Church does not affect them because this site is at a lower level that the B5032 and the railway bridge. Similarly, a well-designed small development at Vinewood Farm would not impinge upon longer and wider views.
Appendix 3 - Non-Designated Local Heritage Assets

The Landscape Character & Built Environment Assessment study identified the following key characteristics which need to be taken into account in the formulation of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan, including locations for new housing, general design criteria, protecting local open spaces, criteria for considering other development and renewable energy.
- The way in which the countryside reaches into the heart of Denstone village is important.
- Longer views from Denstone to the Weaver Hills and up the Churnet Valley are valued.
- It is important to keep Denstone and Rocester/JCB physically separate.
- There are local design and layout features which should be reflected in new development.

The surveys provided a sound basis for the development of policies for the NP but it also showed the need for a list of buildings and structures which are not designated but are of local interest and important. This underpins a policy in the NP aimed at protecting and enhancing non designated local heritage assets. Non-designated assets may be buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated. The following have been identified as being potentially ‘locally listed buildings’. A ‘locally listed building’ is a building which, whilst not Listed, is felt by the Local Planning Authority to be of local importance due to its architectural, historical or environmental significance. These buildings which contribute to the quality of the local environment by enhancing the street scene and sustaining a sense of distinctiveness. (* On SCC Historic Farmsteads Map).

**Main Road (B5031)** - Denstone Hall Farm House. C19, red brick farmhouse with slate rather than usual blue tile roof, plus outbuildings.

**Denstone Lane** - Calwich Cottage. C19, red brick and Staffordshire blue tile roof.

**College Road**
- Heywood Hall. Late C19 Victorian guesthouse, red brick, render and blue tiles.
- The Station House. C19, red brick and Staffordshire blue tile roof & recent extension.
- The Tavern PH. C18/19 Hollington stone building with blue tiled roof
- White Cottage/Holly Bank. C19, rendered farm & cottage and blue tile roofs.
- Brook House. C19, red brick & Hollington stone quoins & blue tile roof.
- The Croft* Substantial 2 bay. C19, red brick farmhouse, blue tile roof & outbuildings.
- Richmond House. C19, red brick and Staffordshire blue tile roof.

**Oak Road**
- Peace Haven. C19, villa; red brick & Hollington stone quoins & blue tile roof.
- Oak Farm. Substantial 2 bay. C19, red brick farmhouse, blue tile roof & outbuildings.
- School Cottage. C19 rendered “L shaped” house with blue tile and notable chimneys
- Jasmine Cottages C19, pair of red brick cottages (one rendered) with blue tile roof.
- Oak House. Altered C19 red brick and blue tile house
- Bank House Farm* C19, red brick & Hollington stone quoins & blue tile roof.
- **Lilac Cottage.** Substantial C19 cottage with red brick (diaper work) and blue tiles.

**Alton Road**
- **Marlpit Cottage.** C19, red brick, Staffordshire blue tile roof with substantial chimney.
- **Hillside.** C19, red brick farmhouse, blue tile roof & outbuildings.

**Marlpit Lane**
- **Vinewood Farm*.** Substantial C19, red brick farmhouse, blue tile roof & outbuildings.
- **Croft Cottage.** Extended C19 red brick and blue tile house

**Narrow Lane** - Primrose Cottage. Extended C19 red brick and blue tile house

**Hollis Lane** – Windy Arbour. C19, farmhouse (rendered), blue tile roof & outbuildings.

**Areas and Landscape**
- Village Hall and fields and behind. views bring rural character into the village centre.
- Oliver’s Green – earthworks.
- Area to W of B5031 incorporating Churnet Valley - important landscape and views.
- Bowling Green and Tennis Courts and small play area – leisure areas.
- Robert’s Green playing fields.
- Field to east of B5031 at start of village - to separate the village from JCB complex.
- All public rights of way including those which go between buildings.
- Saltesford - saltway including sandstone blocks on path in specific areas. Historic transport route and highway (recorded in 1339).

**Features**
- Millennium bench and Millennium tree
- Bench and tree at near junction Alton Road and Marlpit Lane
- Phone boxes in College Road and Stubwood
- Post boxes near the village shop, end of Marlpit Lane and at Quixhill/Prestwood
- Lady Meadow Bridge
- Canal Mileposts in Bowling Green

Also stone Boundary walls and hedges are important features which link buildings and maintain the continuity within the village. Additionally, trees and hedges frame key views or form the backdrop to views within, and beyond, the area in and out of the village. The trees lie mainly in private land and gardens but also include tree belts on the valley slopes and ridge tops which form the backdrop to views within the village.