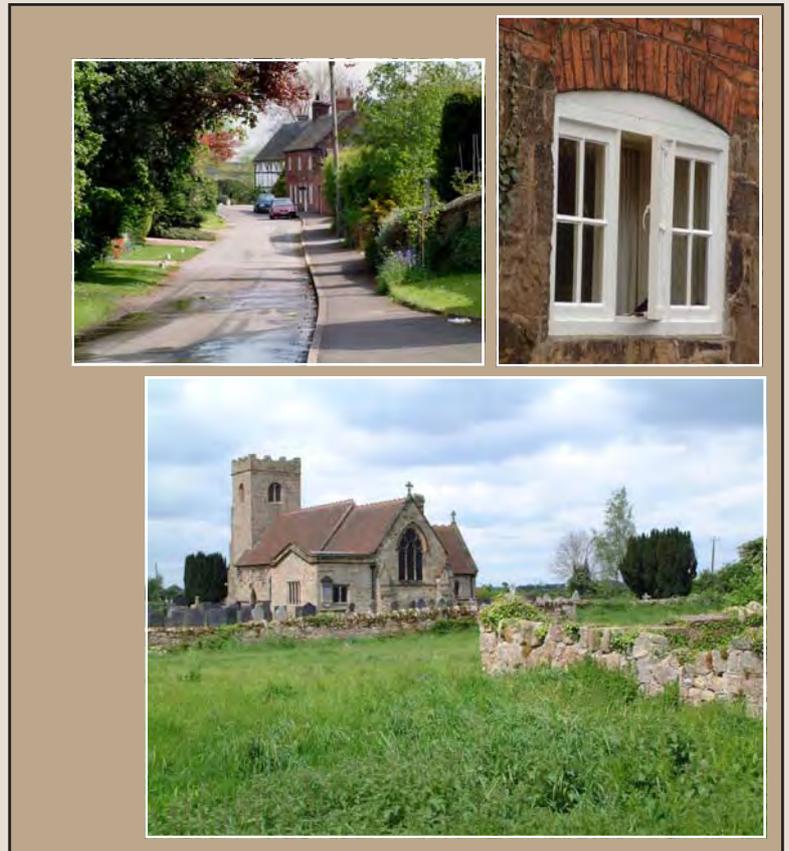


Swarkestone  
*Conservation Area*  
Character Statement



**2013**  
***CONSULTATION DRAFT***

**SOUTH DERBYSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

# Swarkestone *Conservation Area*

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# Swarkestone *Conservation Area*

## Introduction

This statement has been produced by Mel Morris Conservation for, and in association with, South Derbyshire District Council. It sets out the special historic and architectural interest that makes the character and appearance of Swarkestone worthy of protection. It also assesses the degree of damage to that special interest and thus opportunities for future enhancement. This document will be used by the Council when making professional judgements on the merits of development applications.

The Swarkestone Conservation Area was designated by South Derbyshire District Council on 23rd November 1977.

## Summary

Swarkestone lies in the Trent valley on the north bank of the River Trent. Its existence here is largely due to the presence of an ancient and important river crossing, possibly dating from the pre-Conquest period. Shallows in the River Trent at this point enabled a masonry bridge to be constructed in medieval times, although the current bridge over the river was built in 1795-97, as the medieval bridge had been washed away in a flood. This bridge, and its massive 14th century Causeway, continues to dominate the village of Swarkestone and is located on the main trunk road south from Derby (the A514). For much of its history Swarkestone Bridge was the only bridge to cross the Trent for some 10 miles or so, the nearest being at Burton, and it was on a direct route to Derby on the King's Highway from Coventry.



*Swarkestone Bridge 1795 - 97*

The conservation area has two distinct areas of character, unified by single estate ownership but very different in appearance; the sandstone historic buildings, gardens and parkland associated with the former Swarkestone Hall (now ruinous), and the red-brick estate buildings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both were developed at different times by the land-owning Harpur family (Harpur-Crewe from 1808), who still own much of the land in the village today.



*Remains of Swarkestone Hall*

The distinctive characteristics of Swarkestone can be summarised as follows:

- a linear river frontage settlement, dominated by the river, bridge and causeway
- a small rural village with agricultural roots and a long history of occupation and domination by one family – the Harpur family
- a private and quiet character, with few access roads within the settlement, and many intimate connections made by a strong footpath network
- old walls in the eastern half of the conservation area and historic associations evoke strong emotions
- common use of rubble gritstone for boundary walls
- predominantly red brick buildings of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, characterised by high level decorative brickwork details
- large and robust stone buildings of pre-18<sup>th</sup> century origins

## Area of Archaeological Potential

An area of archaeological potential has been defined through an assessment of the known archaeological, documentary and plan-form evidence of the settlement. It has been carried out as part of the review of each conservation area in consultation with the County Archaeologist, the Development Control Archaeologist and the Sites and Monuments Record Officer at Derbyshire County Council.

An area of archaeological potential may encompass both statutory designations (including Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Registered Historic Parks and Gardens) and other non-statutory site information from the Derbyshire Sites and Monuments Record. It shows the probable extent of settlement and industrial activity during the medieval and/or post-medieval periods.

Within the area of archaeological potential there may be reasonable expectation that archaeological evidence relating to the medieval and/or post medieval periods may survive below ground.

Over the centuries, as settlements grow and develop, their focus may shift. Consequently, an area of archaeological potential need not necessarily coincide with the boundary of the conservation area.

## Conservation Area Analysis

### Historic Development

The origins of the settlement are well documented by association with the bridge, which was first recorded as the “ponte de Cordy” in 1204. Cordy Bridge was still an alternative name for the bridge in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There is, however, archaeological evidence for occupation in this area from the Bronze Age onwards. The burial mounds, “lows” or “tumuli” just north of the A514 are the source of the name “Swarkestone Lowes” and are a scheduled ancient monument. The actual name Swarkestone has origins in the Danish personal name Swerkir, who probably occupied the land after the Viking occupation of nearby Repton in 874. It was spelt Swarkeston (without the “e”) until the local vicar added this for historicizing effect in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

That a settlement should be established in the flood plain is interesting; it suggests a very important strategic function, sufficient to outweigh the risk posed by regular flooding of property. When the village was founded records show that the river was much further away, nearer to Stanton-by-Bridge. In any event, the soils of the flood plain are very rich for agriculture and thus the village has been dominated by farming.

The Rolleston family were lords of the Manor until their land was bought by Richard Harpur in 1557. From this time on Swarkestone was the principal seat of the Harpur family, until all the family estates were inherited by the Calke branch in 1679 and their attention turned primarily to Calke. The Calke estate retained ownership of most of the land until the 1980s. They appear to have focussed most of their activity on their demesne (i.e. land in their own occupation) in the eastern part of the conservation area. They rebuilt or enlarged the original Hall and created large walled gardens, as well as building some later splendid buildings, such as Bowl Alley House and Old Hall Farm.

Originally a linear village that fronted the river, both east and west of the bridge, its character has changed dramatically with the increase in traffic along the trunk road. The settlement is now effectively split into two calm, pedestrian friendly areas by the busy A514. However, although the presence of the road now tends to dominate the character of the village, in contrast it is the river that has dominated the historic settlement pattern, and most buildings face away from the main road.

It is notable that all properties within Swarkestone either face the Trent or sit on an access route that runs down to the Trent. This form is based on medieval origins, when the village was laid out as a series of long narrow “strips” between the river foreshore and the upper road (Derby Road). Between the strips, a series of small access tracks ran to the River, of which several are still in use and the ghosted lines of others can be seen in the remains of stone boundary walls and the alignment of buildings. The A514 (Derby Road) was probably a former “back lane” to the properties running along Trentside, facing the River Trent. The footpath running parallel with the river, directly behind Trentside, led to Church Lane, then the Hall, and then beyond to the town pasture (late 16<sup>th</sup> century), and formed another “back lane”. This pattern is very typical of the medieval development of river frontages,

particularly where the river was navigable and provided a source of income, although the extent to which this was the case has not been thoroughly researched. The river had two identifiable launch points on either side of the bridge, along which wharves developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was timber from a river wharf on Woodshop Lane which destroyed the old river bridge in 1795, by becoming lodged against the arches during a flood.

The Trent at Swarkestone was not made navigable until the Trent Navigation Act of 1699 was passed. Further downriver, it was already navigable between Nottingham and Hull. The more the river reduced in size towards its source, the more difficult it was to extend the navigation. By the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Wilden Ferry at nearby Shardlow had become the head of the Trent Navigation, and there were short stretches of the river that were navigable upstream of here. Under the Trent Navigation Act of 1699 Sir William Paget was authorised to make the river navigable to Burton-on-Trent. The stretch between Shardlow and Burton had difficult shallows and the lock at King's Mills, just downstream from Swarkestone, was leased by a difficult man who tried to control access. In time (from 1777) the Trent and Mersey Canal displaced the river in providing the much needed transport infrastructure for the movement of goods. It runs parallel to the Trent half a kilometre to the north of Swarkestone.

There is no obvious heart to the village, or central green. The church was placed on one of the access routes approaching the River, and there was evidence of a ford crossing the Trent at the bottom of Church Lane, which may have formed the early route across the flood plain to Kings Newton. It is not an obvious focal point of the settlement layout today, although several footpaths converge on it and it is likely that the original medieval Manor House stood closer to the church. The church was also served by a "pound" or "pinfold" to the north, which has disappeared. This was a place where straying livestock could be temporarily penned-in by the "pounder".



*Church of St James*

In 1632 the Harpur family finally bought out the last freeholder and had single ownership of the whole of the area of land that falls within the conservation area. The area east of the bridge has a distinct estate character, dominated by late 19<sup>th</sup> century red brick cottages. Its earlier history is clear from the pattern of land subdivision, which survives, although the boundaries have been removed in places, in association with agricultural improvements and the creation of larger fields in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The western portion of the settlement, to the west of the bridge is dominated by 20<sup>th</sup> century development, which has been built largely on greenfield sites. Until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, development was entirely focussed upon the west side of Woodshop Lane. Here buildings appear to jostle for space.

The unusual orientation of the "Crows Nest", which faces north east, appears to suggest a former access point to the river here, or even the location of a former bridge. Perhaps this is why an arm of the Derby / Sandiacre and Trent / Mersey canals was designed to join the

Trent at this point later on. Woodshop Lane probably grew in importance following the construction of the canal and the Crewe and Harpur Arms in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

A large spate of rebuilding took place during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Harpur-Crewe estate. Many houses appear to have replaced earlier buildings on a similar alignment (see 1844 parish map). Since then, the majority of development has taken place during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Approaches

Swarkestone Bridge is a major landmark and it incorporates both the medieval causeway and the late 18<sup>th</sup> century bridge over the River Trent. The approach from the south, therefore, along the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile long bridge provides a long meandering route across the floodplain and a sense of anticipation as there are long distant views of the small settlement on the east side of the bridge, dominated by a ribbon of brick-built cottages that front the River.

The road drops down over the bridge into Swarkestone, passing between two historic buildings, which frame the entrance to the settlement; the Crewe and Harpur Arms and its coach-house to the west, which faces south and engages the traveller, and Bridge Farm Hotel to the east, which sits squarely facing the road. These create an important pinchpoint and both buildings share common architectural features, suggesting that they were designed or built at a similar time. However, as far as the passerby is concerned, this is all that can be seen of the village of Swarkestone. Its historic core and early history remain largely unobserved and one is in danger of passing through without realising that there is much more to the village. This is partly because of the lie of the land, there being no changes in level, but also because there has been very little change to the medieval layout of the settlement. The historic properties still predominantly face the river, accessed only by minor tracks and paths.



*Crewe and Harpur Arms (top) and its Coach House (bottom)*



*Gatepiers to the former Swarkestone Hall*

From the north, approaching from Derby the presence of a settlement to the south is suggested by a pair of grandiose gatepiers to the former Swarkestone Hall, at the end of Church Lane, and that is all as the buildings are separated from the main A514 by a large expanse of agricultural land. This gated entrance no longer has a direct link to an access drive. The current entrance to this part of the conservation area is along a simple farm track further to the east.

The lack of presence of the village today may be explained by the re-routing of the main road through the village. The A514 was once a secondary route from Derby, the main and original route being along Lowes Lane, which is the northern arm of the crossroads at the junction of Woodshop Lane and Barrow Lane, to the west side of the settlement. This route would have taken travellers along Woodshop Lane, which is the only road in Swarkestone that can really be called a village street. The A514 formed more of a “back lane” to the properties on the river frontage, although never formally described as such.



*Gateway to Woodshop Lane  
at junction with Barrow Lane*

The cottages on the river frontage are now approached from Church Lane, which has a narrow, low-key, hedge-lined entrance from the A514. This is the only surviving public road now in what were a series of wall-lined access tracks running from the A514 to the river frontage. Church Lane leads to an access road running along the bank of the Trent (named Trentside), which is a 20<sup>th</sup> century creation. All the early plans and OS maps clearly show that the river bank was much closer to the frontages of the cottages. The river bank was dredged in 1936 and built up to improve the flood defences.

Swarkestone can be reached from Barrow upon Trent via Barrow Lane (the A5132), which meets the A514 north of the Crewe and Harpur Arms. At the junction of Lowes Lane, Barrow Lane and Woodshop Lane is an old post office, orientated to face visitors approaching from the east. Approaching from the west, the village entrance is not particularly distinct. The buildings are set apart within long narrow gardens and do not have a strong presence on the A5132.

## Building Materials and Details

Local geology and availability of building materials directly influenced the form and appearance of Swarkestone. The range of materials and the way in which they were used in local building details is intricately linked with local identity. The appendix lists the special and typical traditional building details encountered within the conservation area, and is supplemented by photographs, to provide a snapshot of the local vernacular details.

Given its proximity to Stanton-by-Bridge and the small gritstone quarries that characterise much of that settlement, it is no surprise to find stone used extensively in Swarkestone. This would have all been brought into the village as the rich alluvial soils of the flood-plain would not have generated any building stone. Most interestingly, although the predominant character of the village is that of a brick-built settlement, the vast majority of the boundary walls are built from roughly-coursed rubble gritstone, of large blocks, with mortared joints and small pieces of stone added for structural strength (in many cases this may be a medieval practice). These are found throughout the conservation area and this tends to suggest that many of the walls are either of considerable age or that they were rebuilt using stone immediately to hand (i.e. recycled from existing walls). There are only a few exceptions such as the brick walls within the walled gardens at the Old Hall site. This early

brickwork is part of an earlier local tradition of brick-making in Swarkestone. Evidence of local brick making comes from the 1580s at Brick Kiln Close, outside the conservation area. Stone, however, now ties the various threads of the historic street pattern together. It was also the material used for the main historic monument, Swarkestone Bridge.

Boundary walls are finished with copings in a variety of patterns – the earliest are the triangular copings at the Old Hall site with broad flat copings elsewhere (such as those defining early field boundaries). The later copings appear to be a half-round and “cock and hen” pattern.

The stone buildings are of some age, with one exception (Church House), which dates from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was simply faced with stone possibly as an expression of its increased status being located opposite the church. In addition to the bridge, the earliest stone buildings are:

- Old Hall Farm
- Bowl Alley House
- Thythe Barn
- parts of the Church of St. James, particularly the Chapel



*Church House, coursed stone*

The oldest parts of these buildings (the ruinous 16<sup>th</sup> century Old Hall, the Harpur family chapel and Thythe Barn) incorporate rubblestone, with dressed quoins and window and door surrounds shaped from large blocks of sandstone. The Old Hall was also at one time partly rendered in a lime and aggregate mix and some small fragments still cling to the weathered masonry. Old Hall Farm and Bowl Alley House were built like the west tower of the church from much more regular coursed stone. This has weathered over time to a mellow colour and character.

Remnants of timber-framing survive in several buildings, but the only building where timber framing is now visible externally is Crows Nest. This incorporates box-framing, a type of construction associated with this region. There are remnants of timber-framing within Ivy Cottage on Derby Road and timber-framing and a cruck-frame within Hollies Farm. Most timber-framed cottages would have been built with a stone footing.

From c1650 many of the cottages and farms appear to have been built in brick, sometimes with a stone plinth. There are remnants of this 17<sup>th</sup> century brickwork that survive at Hollies Farm, Trentside Farm, Trent Cottage, The Nook and Woodshop House.

Stone footings (the remains of earlier buildings) can also be seen at the base of later brick buildings (e.g. Trent View) and just like other local villages, such as Stanton and Ticknall, there is evidence that stone was used for many of the buildings before the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was incorporated into the brick rebuilds. However, evidence is more limited in Swarkestone as there are only fragments of stone walls and there appears to have been a large rebuilding programme, which more or less obliterated the earliest cottages.

The earliest surviving buildings, therefore, were built from gritstone and timber-frame (with some 17<sup>th</sup> century brickwork) but these were largely displaced in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century by brick.

Brick is now the dominant material in the village and it has been used to great decorative effect in many of the buildings. Some of the most notable are the estate cottages, which incorporate an exuberant use of brick to create interesting shapes of roofline and eaves treatment, and the model farm at Old Hall Farm, where brick is used to provide practical but stylish building details. These include rounded moulded arises to oval ventilation holes in the gable-ends, the same rounded bricks around cart openings and taking-in doors, and unusual patterns of brick “breathers” for ventilation in the haybarns and cow-sheds.

The Harpur-Crewe estate had a brickworks in nearby Ticknall, which provided a reliable source, with a consistent deep orange colour.

Brickwork is used for structural details such as corbelled eaves, some plain with several courses of brick projecting one above the other or “dentilled” brickwork, where each alternate header brick projects to create a decorative effect. In some other cases the header bricks are laid diagonally to produce a “sawtooth” pattern (e.g. Hall Farm Cottages).

There are also a number of distinctive decorative building details that were used by the Harpur-Crewe estate in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Swarkestone. These are not limited to one design but to a family of details:

- gable verges are typically corbelled in brickwork as either one simple band (which can continue along the eaves or at the base of a chimney stack) or 3 corbelled bands, some of which are “dentilled”
- “gables” are incorporated into roofs above windows that sit below the eaves line. This is in order to introduce variety and enhance the decorative quality of the building. There are examples of brickwork in the gable of the dormer laid in a herringbone pattern or corbelled

Although there are not many historic buildings, there are still a wide variety of window aperture treatments; segmental brick arches, gauged brick lintels, semi-circular arches, plain and wedge-shaped stone ashlar lintels (see photographs of building details in the appendix).

- the segmental brick arch is generally found in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century on the smaller domestic buildings. This was the simplest and easiest to construct as taper was accommodated wholly in the mortar joints, without the need to cut the bricks (e.g. The Cottage and Woodshop Cottage, Woodshop Lane). The most basic workers cottages had a single header course (e.g. Hall Farm Cottages and Trentside Cottages). This is most commonly used in association with casement or horizontally sliding sashes
- the gauged brick arch (with a flat soffit) used generally on more substantial houses in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. the coach-house at the Crewe and Harpur Arms). It required special bricks and a skilled bricklayer to “rub” the bricks together.
- the semi-circular arch. This was a more formal classically inspired detail. There are examples of this at the coach-house behind the Crewe and Harpur Arms.
- the incised and plain stone wedge lintel with dropped keystone, generally found from 1800 and through the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Crewe and Harpur Arms, Bridge Farm Hotel, Woodshop House and Church House). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century brick

lintels (segmental and gauged) were less fashionable and stone became popular and easier to obtain with the introduction of the canals and railways.

- plain square stone lintels (e.g. The Gables and the brick extension to Old Hall Farm)
- the chamfered and moulded stone lintels, generally found during the second half of the 19th century (e.g. Hollybush Cottage)

On the uppermost floor there was often no need for a brick lintel as the wall-plate could be carried over the window, sometimes supplemented by a simple timber lintel, providing the support required. There are occasional instances of this practice (e.g. Hollies Farm, Trent Side and Ye Old Post Office, Woodshop Lane).

In combination with the brick arches, stone cills were not normally used, relying on the simple weathering properties of the brickwork (e.g. Nos. 2 and 3 Trentside Cottages and The Cottage and Woodshop Cottage, Woodshop Lane). Blue clay tiles have been used on cills, usually in recent years, as a more effective weathering (e.g. Hollies Farm, Trent Side and The Reading Room, Church Lane). Generally, in Swarkestone the more substantial houses and farmhouses have dressed stone cills.

The majority of the windows are casements with chamfered frames, some subdivided with a mullion and transom. There are several examples of horizontal sliding sashes and vertical sliding sashes are reserved for the largest formal buildings (e.g. The Crewe and Harpur Arms, Derby Road).

Staffordshire blue clay tiles predominate on the roofs of the village, being easily imported into the area after the local stretch of the Trent and Mersey canal was opened in 1777. Blue clay tiles are extremely durable and from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century on they tended to replace the local red clay tiles. The problem with the hand-made red clay tiles was that they lacked the durability of the new “imported” blue clay tiles from Staffordshire, so that they were rarely retained when a building was re-roofed and almost never used on new buildings. Where hand-made red clay tiles survive, therefore (as on the rear roof slope of Old Hall Farm and the pitched church roof of 1876), it is important to try to preserve this local building tradition. Hand-made red clay tiles are still manufactured today and are readily available. There are also several instances of machine-made red clay tiles being used at Swarkestone on the 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages (Hall Farm Cottages at Church Lane and Trent Cottage and Cobster Cottage at Trent Side).



*Harpur Crewe estate casement window with chamfered frames*

Original handmade blue clay tiles also incorporate subtle fluctuations in colour, which are not found in the new Staffordshire blue clay tiles being manufactured today, so it is equally important to preserve these examples.

Both the Crewe and Harpur Arms and Bridge Farm Hotel have graduated Burlington slate

roofs, a beautiful natural material. There are relatively few examples of this traditional slate in South Derbyshire, it being more common north of the Trent valley. These slates were brought into Derbyshire from Cumbria in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, possibly by canal, and are still quarried today. Both buildings originally also would have had sash windows. The farmhouse has, however, lost its original sash windows to uPVC.

The roof pitches associated with clay tiles vary between a minimum of 35 degrees and a more typical pitch of 45 degrees, a requirement of the material. In Swarkestone the roof pitches of the early stone buildings (e.g. Old Hall Farm, Derby Road) are generally steeper than the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, typically 50 degrees.



*Steep roof pitches at  
Old Hall Farm*

## Views

Every conservation area has a multitude of changing views, both close-range and more expansive, too numerous to cover comprehensively in a document of this scope. This section describes a selection of general and more specific views that are likely to impress themselves most strongly in a visitor's experience of the conservation area. Some of the viewpoints referred to are included in the conservation area map included in this document.

The conservation area is of a flat and open nature and views are, therefore, either expansive with a few landmarks or focal points, or restricted to the more intimate relationships between buildings. The main exception is where there is some height and vantage point from the causeway and humped bridge over the river. Overall the conservation area is characterised by many open spaces with long views across the fields and few interruptions.

The best defining views from outside the conservation area boundary are:

- from the causeway and bridge, the long views of the Crewe and Harpur Arms, with its beautiful graduated slate roof in horizontal profile above the bridge parapet
- from the causeway and bridge, oblique views of the red brick 19<sup>th</sup> century housing to the east, strung out along the northern bank of the river, with the broad expanse of the river dominating the scene
- across the fields and hedgerows from the A514 south towards the Landmark Trust's Bowl Alley House
- from Barrow Lane looking west towards the junction with Woodshop Lane. This view of the former post



*View of  
Bowl Alley House*

office is important, as this is a pivotal building that sits at the back of the pavement and turns the corner, a focal point at the entrance to the village. It may have been originally built as a small alehouse, “The Gate”, hence its apparent strategic appearance to allure or catch the eye of travellers, from the north (Lowes Lane)

Within the conservation area, the best defining views are:

- the picturesque views looking south along Woodshop Lane. The historic buildings to the west and views of the river unfold. The Crows Nest is a strong focal point in these views, because of its distinctive timber-frame construction, although the bridge over the Trent is in direct line of sight and the most important landmark in this view
- the views of the 14th century church tower and churchyard looking from the footpaths to the west, framed by yew trees at the entrance gates to the churchyard
- views of the church from the grounds of Old Hall Farm, although not a public vantage point
- the view of Church House and the former Reading Rooms at the southern side of the churchyard, a distinctive pair of buildings
- the view from the bottom of Church Lane looking towards Swarkestone Bridge



*View past The Crow's Nest to the River Trent*

## Conservation Area Description

### AREA I

**This area includes the main part of the village, fronting the River Trent, to either side of the A514**

To the east of the A514, the settlement is dominated by red brick estate cottages and two small farms, with some low-key ancillary farm buildings. The buildings fronting the river are detached, widely spaced in generous gardens, but still relatively small in scale. They are predominantly 19<sup>th</sup> century although the remains of earlier stone buildings can be seen in later brick walls.

Stone boundary walls run north/south dividing former medieval crofts: long thin plots of land, each one being farmed by the owner of the property on the river frontage. Running parallel to these long plots, which originally extended to the current A514, are the remains of two cart tracks, one very overgrown, the other preserved as a farm access track to Hollies Farm. Another of these routes is preserved in front of Trentside Cottages. Over time many of the boundaries have been removed and ploughed out, probably because of

aggregated land ownership or combined tenancies under the estate. Four of these access trackways are still evident on the first edition OS map (1880) between Derby Road and Church Lane.

It is clear from the earliest maps that the banks of the Trent were much less well-defined than today, as there was no river frontage access road called Trentside. Instead, the access tracks provided connections to the “back lane” (A514). The river banks also contained a wharf or a shallow area for launching boats to the east of the bridge, now laid out and backfilled as a small grassy bank.

A number of footpaths criss-cross the central and eastern area (running mainly east-west). These are important as they are still heavily used when the river floods.

To the west of the A514, the Crewe and Harpur Arms was built by the estate as a coaching inn, and had plenty of stabling and accommodation for coaches, most of which survives to the north, although two ranges of buildings have been demolished. It is thought to have replaced a previous inn on the southern river bank. The buildings are unified by the use of red/orange brickwork although the Stableblock is much more ambitious and classical in its design, incorporating a symmetrical frontage with low wings and a triangular pediment with stone dressings, and is much more typical of buildings within landed estates. The inn overlooks the river and this important aspect and its strategic association with the bridge is enhanced by the lawn forming the northern bank of the river, immediately to the south of Woodshop Lane.

Early Ordnance Survey plans illustrate a cutting running to the west of the pub, connecting the river with the Trent and Mersey canal, but the only evidence of this canal link within the conservation area is the opposing walls at the bottom of Woodshop Lane and walls on Barrow Lane (formerly bridge parapets). The “cut” was formed in association with the development of a timber-jettied wharf to the south of Crows Nest, but it was shortlived. The name Woodshop Lane and the use of the wharf for the movement of sawn timber are the only surviving associations now with this industry, which was once a common trade for large wooded estates such as the Harpur-Crewe estate. There must have been a sawmill here during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, probably powered by a stationary steam engine, but its whereabouts is unknown.

The western part of the settlement has two main clusters of historic buildings grouped to the west on Woodshop Lane;

- at the junction with Barrow Lane – (now Woodshop House, Ye Old Post Office and The Roches), and
- near the river – (now Watermeadows, Meadows Farm, Trent View and The Cottage and Woodshop Cottage)

The area historically had low-key agricultural or timber-trade uses. The modern house names, however, have little connection with this former character. These buildings are generally inward looking and enclose private yards. Neither of



*Woodshop Lane looking towards  
The Cottage and Woodshop Cottage*

these groups had high status, but seem to have been low-key working buildings, built by the Harpur-Crewe estate but perhaps peripheral to their interests and certainly budget buildings, not lavishly detailed. They housed labourers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The area between these two groups is now “infilled” by modern housing, which has a neutral effect on the character of the conservation area.

There were also a number of small cottages on small irregular plots built along Barrow Lane, and the earliest map of 1844 suggests that these were a late encroachment onto an area of roadside land and not part of the medieval village.

## AREA 2

**This area includes the oldest surviving buildings within the settlement – the site of the Old Hall, the current Old Hall Farm, the former gardens and pleasure grounds serving the Old Hall and St James’s Church**

To the west of Area 2 is the church of St. James and its small private family chapel attached to the south. The chapel was built by the Harpur family in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The church is of 12<sup>th</sup> century origin, although much was rebuilt in 1876 by architect F. J. Robinson. The churchyard is particularly distinctive for its 14<sup>th</sup> century churchyard cross and numerous slate gravestones dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which were probably made available by the proximity of the canal.



*Church of St James, Harpur Crewe Chapel*

To the east of the church and chapel is a small walled field, which was formerly the site of the Vicarage and associated farmbuildings, and appears to have been an early part of the settlement. The only evidence of the Vicarage now is a separate access lane to the south of the churchyard, which was introduced when the church and churchyard walls were rebuilt ca.1876. Before then, the entrance to the Vicarage was to the north east of the churchyard.

The remainder of Area 2 is comprised of three major historic buildings and many semi-ruinous walls and buildings forming the remains of Swarkestone Hall, its gardens, ancillary buildings and landscape setting. The brick-built Model Farm of 1860 also has its own distinct identity but the farmyard has been massively extended with steel agricultural buildings in a large modern farming operation.

In the largely open landscape of the flood plain in this area, the boundary walls are particularly distinctive and dominant. With their changes in construction, incorporating changes in coursing, height and coping and occasional stone dressings, they offer a tantalising and mysterious sense of the history of the place.

Most of Area 2 incorporates land that is still in the ownership of the Harpur-Crewe estate, although two areas have been sold - Bowl Alley House (to the Landmark Trust) and the Thythe Barn (to a private owner). The northern half of this area is a large open field, with the occasional sycamore. It is used as “parkland” pasture by the Harpur-Crewe estate and has not been ploughed within living memory. It still has a parkland character despite the destruction of the Hall in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is described on various historic maps as

“The Cuttle”. Straight through this area runs the rough limestone approach drive to the Hall, breaking up the parkland into two halves. An earlier drive once crossed this area from the gatepiers in the far north western corner, and is close to the line of a public footpath, which starts at a stile further along Church Lane.



*Top left: View of Bowl Alley House from the church  
 Top right: The lawn at Bowl Alley House  
 Left: Bowl Alley House*

On the southern edge of this parkland meadow is “Thythe Barn”, a large early 17th century stone building with a chamfered stone plinth and small chamfered windows. In fact, there is little to indicate that it was originally either a threshing barn or a stableblock and is more likely to have contained some form of accommodation. To the east is a very unusual building - Bowl Alley House. It has acquired various names over the years (Stand, Pavilion, Balcony, Banqueting House) probably because its original purpose was not known, although documents show that it was built in 1632 for John Harpur, and was most likely built as a banqueting and bowling house. It seems rather isolated from the rest of the gardens but is a particularly prominent landmark in views from Derby Road, although its main aspect is south facing, looking across the river and the Trent valley. On this side the building is richly endowed with a long series of high-level leaded-light windows that shimmer in the reflected sun. The enclosed first-floor room provided a good vantage point for the lawn below and long views across the valley. This central section also has a battlemented parapet to the roof and a small ground floor covered seating area, which has been created as a loggia with classical Tuscan columns, all enabling different levels of “prospect” across the countryside. Underneath is a cellar for storage. The central part is framed by a pair of towers with ogee-domed lead roofs. The stonework is particularly beautiful, as it has weathered to a soft patina which shows all the layers and veining within the sedimentary sandstone. It was probably chosen for this decorative effect and was not a local stone. The same walls with triangular copings that surround the rest of the gardens also enclose the walled garden to the south of Bowl Alley House. This space was probably used for outdoor games.

The Harpur family built the other principal building within this area, Old Hall Farm, sometime in the 17<sup>th</sup> century before the family moved to Calke Abbey. Although the precise date of construction is not documented, it probably dates from the 1620s. It has caused some confusion as it was rather a grand ancillary building to the original Hall, if that

was its purpose, although it is quite small, only one room deep. It is quite an impressive building – 3-storeys with 3 large gables facing the front with chamfered mullioned windows.



*Left: Old Hall Farm Right: Corsican Pine at Old Hall Farm*

On the front lawn of Old Hall Farm are two large Corsican pines. It is quite likely that these were planted by the Harpur Crewe estate in 1876 at the same time that the estate planted pairs of Corsican pines throughout Ticknall.

The original Old Hall is now a series of ruinous

walls, but they have sufficient features, with fireplaces, flues and areas of dressed masonry to awaken the imagination. It is documented to have had a gatehouse and a dovecote in the 1620s. Gatehouses were very fashionable in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are fragments of dressed stone window surrounds and ashlar for a door or gatepiers surviving within the wall north of the Old Hall. Two small, square buildings on the 1844 parish map suggest possible locations for the dovecote.

The north-east boundary of the conservation area follows a small ditch and stream. Where this flows due east, the boundary of the conservation area runs south towards the Trent. Here there are the remains of an unusual brick walled enclosure, measuring approximately 15 metres by 22 metres. Although only sections of two walls survive, these illustrate that the walls enclosed an open compound. This was a Dog Kennel (cited on the 1844 Tithe Schedule). The volume of noise from barking hounds would have been considerable and these structures tended to be set some distance from the house. There is another similar but later example of a brick kennels at Kedleston Hall. The stone copings that survive are the same triangular copings as those used on the stone walls surrounding the Hall. The brickwork is of a fine quality, with intermittent brick piers, a low brick plinth and moulded weathering. The solid brick walls are wide with a very irregular bond (the dimensions and quality of the bricks being characteristic of the late 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century). The conservation area eastern boundary then runs south and follows the line of another hedge-lined ditch and raised earthwork on which stands a row of oak trees.

To the north and west of the Old Hall were a series of walled gardens. The north wall of the Old Hall defined the southern perimeter of one of these walled gardens. These still form an impressive series of early garden walls, originally over 2 metres high and almost 1 metre thick, although now reduced in places to rubble. The body of the walling comprises large blocks of lichen-covered rubble sandstone with fine joints. The quality of the original masonry has helped these walls to survive for such a long time. Ivy-clad copings soften many of these walls and twisted roots and trunks of trees are intertwined within the masonry. There are occasional areas of dressed stone, suggesting a former window, gateway or doorway. A large number of the original copings still survive. These are large blocks of sandstone, laid in two courses, of triangular section with a weathering to the soffit. Where these copings have been replaced, as part of a repair, this is invariably using a “cock-and-hen” type of coping, with the inevitable loss of the monumental scale of the original.

These walled garden spaces have lost their unified formality but this has been replaced with an air of crumbling dignity and sense of intrigue.

Although the walled gardens are now in agricultural use, the scale of these spaces and the structures nevertheless conveys a sense of the historic importance of the site. The walled garden nearest the Old Hall was built from wide walls of coursed stone with a large double stone capping of wedge-shaped coping stones. This kind of detail can be seen at other important walled garden sites (such as Hardwick Hall), which have been dated to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and these walls could also be late 16<sup>th</sup> century in origin. This treatment is used for the majority of the stone walls, where the copings survive. To the west of this was a larger walled garden, also surrounded on all four sides by tall stone walls. Although no longer visible, this space appears to have been laid out as a formal garden at some time, with a central circular path and radiating paths dividing the space into quarters (photographs of the layout were taken by the farmer and others when this space was last ploughed).

The garden nearest the church comprises two walled enclosures. These have brick walls to the north, west and south and a roughly central stone wall dividing the space into two large segments. The east wall is stone and forms the perimeter of the enclosed garden to the east. It seems likely that the brick walled enclosure was slightly later in date than the stone walled enclosure nearest the hall. The use of bricks was customary for a kitchen garden in the 18th century, but there are few examples of brickwork in this region of earlier origin and the scale of the garden is very large for a pre-18th century kitchen garden. The use here of 17th or even 16th century brickwork is very early. The walls are over 2 metres high in places, but have still lost their original copings, much material having been removed in recent years as a result of theft. At the base of the walls is a brick plinth with a moulded course of brickwork. Along the northern wall are three later brick buttresses. In fact the brickwork is identical to that used at the dog kennels (a walled enclosure running along the north eastern perimeter of the conservation area). In the 17th century the walls would have relied on the properties of the south and east facing bricks to convey heat, and there is no evidence of any flues or method of heating to keep the chill off ripening fruit.



*Remains of early brickwork in walls associated with the former Old Hall*

The original boundary wall and walled garden enclosure between the hall site and the churchyard is brick, although this has now been reduced in height so that it is hardly noticeable, and now provides immediate views of the church.

The southern conservation area boundary follows the river's edge. The water meadow is a

long thin band running parallel with the river and separated from the house and its garden by a large bund, which appears as a flood defence as long ago as 1880. The area regularly floods and the embankment is eroding.

## Loss and Damage

The concept of conservation areas was introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967, as an acknowledgement of the need to conserve the “cherished local scene” in the face of accelerated change following the Second World War. It was not intended that development should be prevented, but rather that settlements should develop over time in a way that reflects and strengthens their special character. At Swarkestone, some of the undesirable changes described below predate the designation of the conservation area in 1977. The designation was put in place as a safeguard against further harmful development, so far as this could be achieved by the need for planning permission.

In defining the character of the conservation area we can also identify instances where the village has suffered alterations or losses that either individually or cumulatively have diluted this character. It is hoped that identifying these will help householders, designers and the planning authority to reverse some of the damaging alterations and to avoid the same mistakes in the future.

The main threat to the character of the village is the potential loss of the historic infrastructure – the stone and brick boundary walls that define much of the character of the conservation area. These are suffering from localised damage, loss of copings (some have been replaced in concrete) and neglect; some materials are even getting stolen. At present, walls can be removed in sections or fragments without the need for planning permission. If still in use as boundaries, these are likely to survive. Where they have become redundant, there could be future pressure for development or more active use of the land, leading to a desire for their removal.



*Concrete copings, Woodshop Lane*

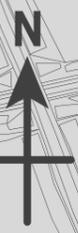
In terms of loss of building detail, the village has fared quite well, with little loss of historic window or door patterns and no instances of the loss of traditional roofing materials. The areas affected most by alterations are the terraced cottages along Church Lane and returning to front the river, and several along Woodshop Lane. There is a risk that the historic window patterns that currently survive in buildings that are not listed will be lost without additional planning control.

New development has taken place largely to the west of Derby Road and the bridge and has filled in most available plots of land. Individually, new detached houses have had a neutral effect on the character of the conservation area, although by comparison with the

earlier properties most of the new houses are much larger in scale and this change in character has cumulatively resulted in a loss of historic identity.

Condition

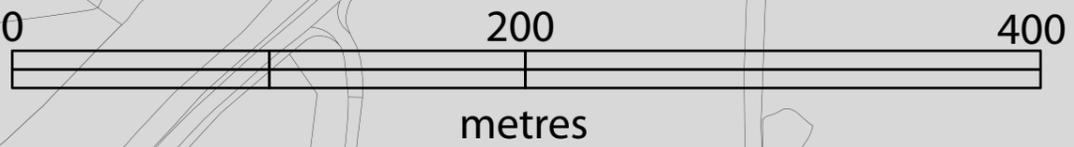
Buildings such as Old Hall Farm and the former Old Hall and its stone walled enclosures require ongoing maintenance, and are inevitably a great drain on resources because of their extent. The general condition of these buildings is poor. Even the main farmhouse needs widespread re-pointing.



- ① Character Areas
- Conservation Area boundary
- - - Character Area boundary
- ☆ Open spaces
- 👁️ Principal views
- ⊕ Architectural landmarks and focal points
- Listed buildings
- Other buildings which contribute positively to the special architectural or historic character
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Parks and gardens on the English Heritage register
- Areas of high archaeological potential



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South Derbyshire District Council

**Swarkestone Conservation Area**  
Designated : 23rd November 1977

# Appendix

## Distinctive Architectural Details

### SWARKESTONE



## Checklist of details

The details in this appendix illustrate those building elements that help to define Swarkestone's particular character. These may be common everyday vernacular details found repeatedly throughout the conservation area or may be more exceptional, consciously designed features.

This appendix may prove useful in providing inspiration for new development, whether traditional or contemporary, if used with care. Paradoxically, the outstanding architectural details of a conservation area may not be the ones that are most typical of the area. They often belong to the important key buildings of a village and may look out of place on smaller buildings in subordinate locations. The majority of buildings in the conservation areas of South Derbyshire are plainly and simply detailed.

### Boundary treatments

- Large blocks of mortared rubblestone, often constructed with small slips of stone, a form of galleting, used for structural rather than decorative reasons
- Old red brick walls made of long, thin handmade bricks (The Old Hall kitchen garden)
- Stone copings:
  - triangular two-tier dressed ashlar copings
  - large flat slabs of stone
  - "cock-and-hen" stones

### Chimney stacks and pots

- Heavily corbelled brick stacks, with oversailing courses in red or blue brick

### Doors

- Panelled and boarded doors

### Lintels and cills

- Segmental brick arches
- Timber first-floor lintels
- Shaped stone lintels
- Stone wedge lintels, with dropped keystones
- Cill details – plain brickwork (no cill), ashlar stone & blue brick or blue tiles

### Roof types and details

- Eaves level dormers or "gablets", expressed with decorative brickwork: herringbone or corbelled, or a combination of both
- Graduated Burlington slate roofs
- Welsh slate
- Staffordshire blue clay tiled roofs, some with sections of beaver-tail tiles, occasional handmade red clay tiles

### Walls

- "Sawtooth" or "dentilled" brick eaves
- corbelled brick verges:
  - plain single or multiple courses of corbelled brick
  - "dentilled" and corbelled
- use of earlier rubblestone incorporated into later brick buildings
- stone plinths
- large blocks of dressed gritstone ashlar
- Timber-frame (box-frame) - Crows Nest

## Checklist of details cont'd

### Windows

- Timber multi-paned casements recessed within chamfered frames
- Horizontally sliding sashes
- Vertically sliding multi-paned sashes

# BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

## Walls and copings

Stone boundary walls, from top to bottom:

- Random rubble wall with chamfered ashlar coping
- Large block mortared wall with “cock and hen” coping
- Large blocks of roughly-coursed rubble gritstone, mortared with flat stone copings
- Random rubble mortared wall in pink sandstone with small pieces of stone added for structural strength





Brick boundary walls (left). These walls, built from long, thin bricks, with an ashlar coping, are fragments of the probable early 17th century kennels and kitchen garden at the former Swarkestone Old Hall.



Stone walls to former gardens at the Old Hall (right). Mortared walls built of large blocks of sandstone with copings laid in two courses, of triangular section with a weathering. Shallow arched lintel over doorway with rebated stone jambs may have once been an internal door.



# LINTELS AND CILLS



## Brick lintels

Semi-circular arched lintel (left), with gauged and rubbed bricks and stone cill

Segmental arch in brick (above left) with blue brick cill. Segmental arch (above right) with Staffordshire blue clay tiled cill

Traditional window without cill (right)



Timber lintel (right)



## Stone lintels

Incised stone wedge lintel with keystone (left) of circa 1800.

Wedge stone ashlar lintel with raised keystone (bottom left). Late 19th century chamfered and moulded stone lintel (below right) and stone cill



## ROOF TYPES AND DETAILS



Graduated Burlington slate roofs (above) were imported into the area in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and used on the grander buildings.

The local vernacular roofing materials were tiles, handmade red clay tiles as used at Old Hall Farm (below left). Staffordshire blue clay tiles were easily imported into the area after the canal network expanded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. They are extremely durable. Bands of patterned blue clay tiles create a picturesque effect on 19<sup>th</sup> century estate buildings (below right).



**Chimney stacks and pots** - in the 19<sup>th</sup> century stacks became quite decorative and the multiple flues were often expressed, aping the style of Tudor chimneys (right).

Blue bricks were introduced in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century (left). The dark colour of these “Staffordshire blue” bricks (occasionally referred to as “engineering bricks”) is the result of firing clay with high iron content in a high temperature kiln. They were used in small quantities, where a harder and more durable brick was required, as oversailing courses, but they were also intended to have a decorative character.



## WALLS - Brickwork details



**Gablets** - brickwork laid in a decorative pattern; herringbone (left), corbelled (above), or a combination of both (top left)

**Brick eaves details** - dentilled and corbelled eaves (top left), sawtooth and corbelled eaves (bottom left)



**Brick verge details** - multiple corbels (above left) corbelled with a single course (above right), corbelled with two courses (bottom left) or corbelled with dentilled brickwork (bottom right)



## WALLS - Timber frame and stone



**Timber-frame** - up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the principal building materials for the smaller houses were timber, with panels of wattle-and-daub. The type of timber-frame used in Swarkestone is known as small box-framing - a combination of posts and short horizontal rails. The example at Crows Nest (left) is the only surviving remnant in the village. The wattle and daub was replaced with bricks, here painted white.



**Stone** - stone was commonly used for the footings of timber-framed buildings and rubblestone was used for small agricultural buildings. Remnants of stone buildings and stone plinths or footings of earlier buildings can sometimes be found, incorporated into later brick buildings (left and bottom left).



In the 19<sup>th</sup> century brick was commonly used to dress the window and door surrounds of rubblestone buildings, such as the example of cowsheds at Old Hall Farm (above).

## WINDOWS - Joinery



**Casement windows**  
(left and right)  
From left clockwise;  
- two over four  
casements with transom  
and mullion, recessed  
within a chamfered frame

- six paned, two light  
casement, within a flush  
frame (note the double  
row of blue clay moulded  
cills, probably a later  
addition)

- four paned, three light  
casements, recessed  
within a projecting  
chamfered frame (note  
that there is no cill)



### **Sash windows** (above and right)

Whilst the larger houses of the late 18th century had tall, vertically sliding sash windows (as at the Crewe and Harpur Arms - right), horizontally sliding sash windows are a common feature of the Midlands, often reserved for the less important elevations or small vernacular buildings.

From above left clockwise; - six paned, two light horizontal sliding sash (also known as a "Yorkshire" sash)

- two-paned, two light horizontal sliding sash

- 12 over 12 Georgian vertically sliding sash window without horns

- 8 over 8 Georgian vertically sliding sash window

