



Eccleshall

Town Design Statement



welcome

to Eccleshall's Town Design Statement

A lot of time has gone into its production, and we are very grateful to everyone who helped with the survey work, took photographs, and drew sketches, who drafted and proof read the text, and indeed, to all those people who made comments and suggestions. We have done our best to be

accurate in our research and to reflect the views put to us. It has been prepared with the support of our local planning authority, Stafford Borough Council. We hope you will find it an interesting and useful guide.





What is a Town Design Statement?

The Town Design Statement is a detailed guide to the character of the town as it is today.

It highlights those qualities which are valued by the townspeople and which make it a special place to live and work in.

It sets out design objectives for residents and developers when they are planning to build or modify buildings in the town.

It includes recommendations for new developments so that they will enhance the town.

It is about more than bricks and mortar. It is also about all the elements which are a part of the town's local character, as, for example, pavements, hedges, trees and open space.



How is it to be used?

The Town Design Statement is intended to encourage and improve the design process.

- It is a survey of the relationship between the development site and its surroundings, so enabling the developer to respect and work with what is already there.
- It identifies design opportunities presented by existing views, landscaping, built forms and their materials and details.

Who is it for?

- Developers preparing plans which will take note of and reflect the town's characteristics.
- Property owners who may wish to alter their properties.
- Planning authorities, ensuring that such are able to take Eccleshall's particular character into account when they make their decisions.

- The Parish Council when it views applications for buildings, extensions and changes to properties.
- Local community groups and local businesses, seeking to comment on proposed developments.

The Geography of Eccleshall

Eccleshall is a small town in the West of Stafford Borough. It is the heart of Staffordshire's second largest civil parish and is surrounded by very attractive countryside. The town's position at a fording and bridging point on the River Sow has determined its pattern of development along the river valley. It is a meeting point of east-west and north-south routes. Roads, linking Newport (Shropshire) with Newcastle-under-Lyme, and linking Market Drayton–Whitchurch with Stafford and Stone, meet at Eccleshall. So Eccleshall is very accessible; but it retains the charms of a small town.

A band of alluvium between one and two hundred metres wide follows the line of the river. Most of the historic town is built on these fluvial-glacial gravels.



Modern town development has been southwards onto Mercian Mudstone / Keuper Marls.

There is sandstone from lower Keuper beds about four kilometres west of Eccleshall and a peat deposit between the castle and the church.



Eccleshall Today

Eccleshall is a vibrant town of 2,800 people. Its medieval street plan reflects its medieval borough status. The High Street, in particular, has architecturally significant buildings, and the wider conservation area has listed buildings many of which have not changed significantly for two hundred years. Coaching Inns are evidence of a past role as a staging post from London to Chester and Holyhead. Their covered arcades once served as a butter market. Victorian and Edwardian shop fronts are reminders of a more recent commercial history.

The town has a conservation area, which includes the Parish Church and the Castle. There are 76 listed buildings, half of them in the High Street. A considerable number of unlisted buildings make an equal contribution to the town's charm.

The local population is catered for by a range of essential services. There are three Churches, the Parish Church, the Methodist Church and Roman Catholic Church. There is a post office and public library, a doctors' surgery, a dentist and an optician.

The commercial centre of modern Eccleshall is at the cross roads of the High Street-Stone Road with Castle Street-Stafford Street, although businesses and homes co-exist throughout the town centre. To cater for the wide network of visitors there is a variety of restaurants, seven public houses and approximately three dozen excellent shops. The shops include, among a variety of providers of specialist goods, supermarkets, a butcher and other fresh food providers, a newsagent; restaurants, cafés, take-aways and public houses; clothes boutiques, hairdressers and beauticians. The mix makes an attractive draw to shoppers from outside the town. On street parking outside the shops is a facility appreciated by shoppers.

In Summer, thanks to the community's enthusiasm the town is adorned with flowers and in 2003, 2004, and again in 2005 was awarded a gold certificate by the Royal Horticultural Society in the Heart of England in Bloom competition.



Open Space

Town Meadow, immediately north of the High Street, between it and the River Sow, with a backdrop of trees hiding Eccleshall Castle, is the largest open space in the town. It has been and will be, vigorously guarded from inappropriate development. The town's cricket pitch, tennis courts and scout H.Q. are on its edge. The meadow's importance as a green space is enhanced by the High Street gardens and the grounds of Eccleshall Castle, which are continuous with it. Otherwise, the only green area, which contrasts strongly with the town centre, is a shaded grassy space, the Washpits, which was a small reservoir for fire fighting in the early 19th century.



Eccleshall's History

Name and Origins

The name Eccleshall indicates the town's pre-Saxon origin. Ecles, ecclesia, is the Roman-British word for a church, and halh is ancient British for a meadow by the river. The earliest written evidence of Eccleshall comes in the Domesday Book, compiled on the orders of William the Conqueror in 1086. It records that the manor of Eccleshall had been in the possession of the Bishops of Lichfield since St. Chad's time. The Parish Church is the oldest building, originally built of wood it was replaced by a stone structure at the beginning of the 11th century. During following centuries it was variously extended and rebuilt so as to be impressive enough for bishops to worship in and be buried in. Five bishops of Lichfield are buried here.

Eccleshall Castle

The presence of the Bishops of Lichfield in Eccleshall affected its history and development. The bishops' first stone castle was built in the 13th century by permission of King John. King Edward 1 in 1305 permitted Bishop William

Langton to build a bigger castle. Only fragmentary remains of that survived the building of a new elegant stone house, Eccleshall Castle, by Bishop William Lloyd at the end of the 17th century.

Eccleshall Borough

During the 13th Century, under the Bishop of Lichfield's patronage, Eccleshall village gained royal permission to have a weekly market and an annual fair, in 1153 and 1259 respectively. These were the functions defining its status as borough/town. From this time onwards Eccleshall developed not only as a market town, but, equally, as a manufacturing centre. By the end of the 13th century the 500 townspeople lived by crafts serving the rural economy. The memory of those times is preserved in the shapes of the gardens in the High Street, and in the name, the Burgage.

Eccleshall's involvement, through the centuries, in England's various civil wars was no doubt exciting to the people at the time. Particularly for Bishop Robert Wright who died of a heart attack during a brief siege of the castle in 1643. But these events were not significant in the wider scheme of things, and, for half a millennium, the town's economic growth and prosperity continued to be bound up with local farming.

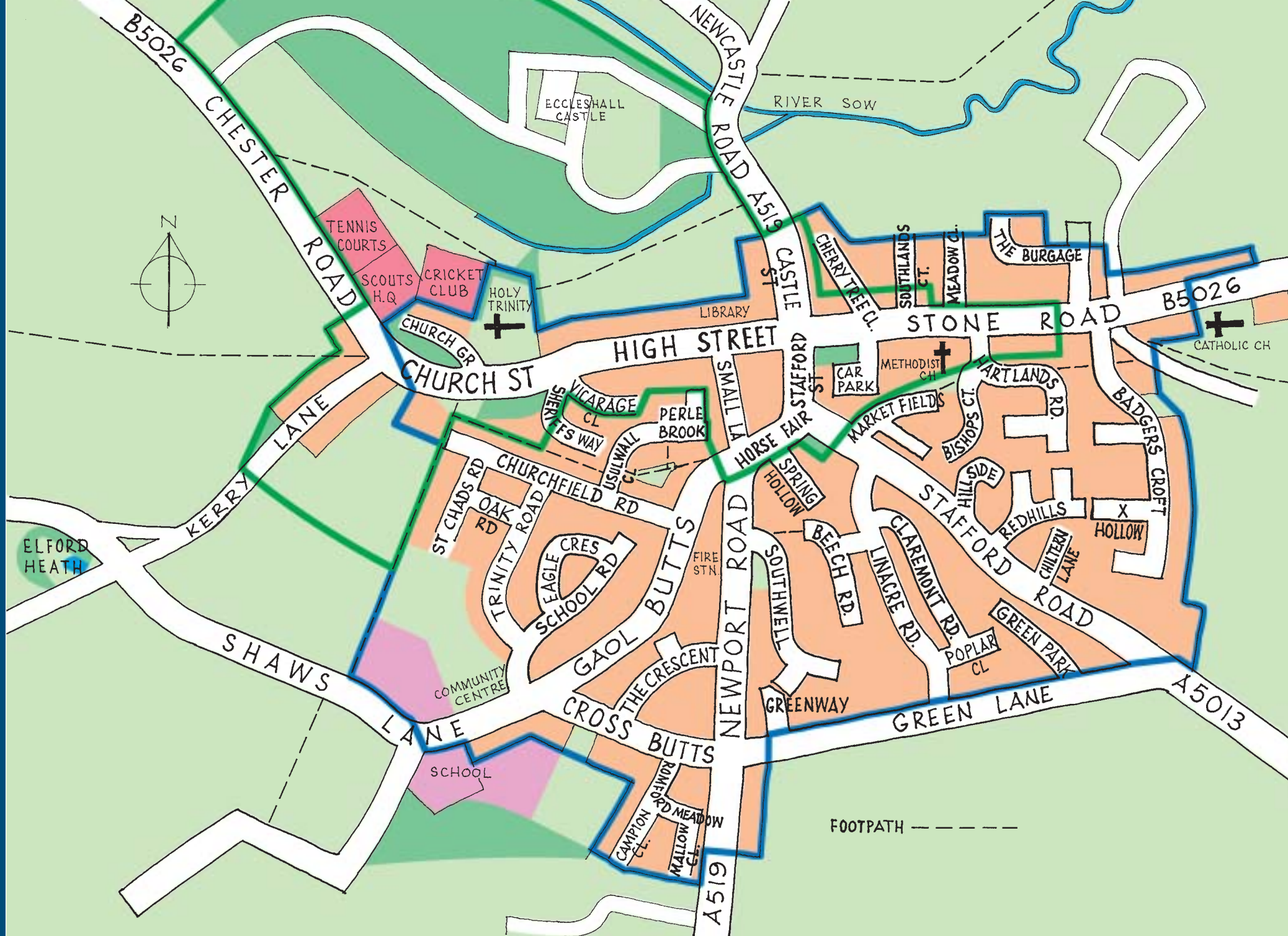
The Coaching Era

The transport revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries had a profound impact on the town. The first of the new age transport, the canals, passed Eccleshall by unnoticed. Not so the development of the turnpike roads. In the mid 18th century, with parliamentary permission and private finance, new roads, built by a generation of inspired engineers, criss crossed the country. Eccleshall became part of the network and enjoyed the benefits of the golden age of coach transport. Routes from London and Birmingham to the west and north west came through Eccleshall. Coaches stopped at the King's Arms and the Royal Oak, bringing with them a new demand for accommodation and support services – stables, hostlers, grooms, wheelwrights, coach makers, servants, grocers and butchers. The town had never been so prosperous.

Railways

The prosperity built on coaching was short lived. By the beginning of the 19th century new routes took traffic away from Eccleshall and within a generation of that railways put an end to it all together. Eccleshall was not on a railway line. This fact alone caused it to return to a quieter dependence on the local economy. In 1867 Bishop George Selwyn, turned his back on 1000 years of history, sold the Castle, and decamped, explaining that a major consideration was his need of speedier transport.

The local market economy with its associated crafts still survived. Leather working and boot and shoe making had a final fling in the 19th century. Independent craftsmen and women, as outworkers, made boots and shoes for bigger concerns in Stone and Stafford. Even this survival did not last long. By the end of the 19th century it had been put out of business by factories in Stafford; a fate suffered by all of the local crafts which had once given Eccleshall its purpose. So for most of the next hundred years Eccleshall slipped into a gentile and faded insignificance only to find a new role in the second half of the 20th century when it re-invented itself as a dormitory, commuter town, with a lively interest in leisure and tourism.



- Area of development
- Open spaces
- Area of trees
- School
- Sports/recreation ground
- Conservation Area boundary
- Rural Development boundary
- Water courses

Map of town and surroundings



Planning Considerations

Guidelines for the development of Eccleshall

Eccleshall is a relatively compact town in a rural setting, and any new development should reflect this fact and retain the existing characteristics.

In 1969 a conservation area was designated to cover:

- the High Street and Small Lane,
- Church Street and part of Kerry Lane,
- Castle Street,
- Stafford Street and Horsefair,
- part of Stone Road.

In 2001 it was extended to include:

- a further part of Stone Road,
- Town Meadow, and
- the grounds of Eccleshall Castle.

The boundaries of the conservation area are shown on the plan. The character of the conservation area is particularly important. It encapsulates Eccleshall's history. The medieval street and building patterns, notably its five main roads and its burgage plots, are preserved within the conservation area.

Most of the buildings in the centre of the town are from the 18th and early 19th centuries. They are predominantly Georgian in style. Although, individually, many of them are not of special architectural quality, collectively, they have a distinctive and attractive character.

The attractiveness of this town centre must be protected from degradation by neglect or insensitive development.

When changes are made they must be to a high standard of design so as to enhance its existing characteristics.

Maintaining the diversity of the town's economy will help to ensure its future prosperity.

New development in the central area should promote the town's commercial activities, especially at pavement level and encourage residential and commercial use above.

This includes careful consideration of the balance between the various types of commercial activity:

- General retail and personal services (planning class A1),
- Financial and professional services (planning class A2),
- And the provision of prepared and hot foods (planning class A3).

The centre of Eccleshall, although smaller than Stafford and Stone, should be treated with the same respect and consideration, to maintain an appropriate balance of uses in the area. Proposals for various uses will be treated on their merits, providing that they would not result in more than 30% of linear ground floor frontage being in non A1 uses.



Guidelines for Building Development

- Proposed developments should conform to the guidelines set out in this document.
- Traditional/classical proportions, good design and carefully selected materials are the key to successful integration of new buildings with old.
- Proposals for any part of the town will be assessed in relation to:
 - Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001,
 - Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011,
 - The supplementary Planning Guidance 'Planning for Landscape Change',
 - The Eccleshall Town Design Statement.

- Developers will be encouraged to consider and adopt the recommendations in 'Local Attraction: The Design of New Housing in the Countryside', ISBN 0946004, available from CPRE, Warwick House, 25, Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 00P.
- No further building should be permitted on the burgage plots to the north of the High Street.
- The town meadow should be protected as an open space.
- Any new development must sit comfortably with its neighbours and enhance its location, taking into account:
 - the lie of the land, blending unobtrusively into the landscape and townscape,
 - the scale, shapes and proportions of older buildings in the neighbourhood,
 - the height, roof pitch, span and eaves depth of surrounding buildings;
 - taking care not to harm those features which give the area its character, but preserving and enhancing them.
- Proposed developments will recognise the importance of the proper treatment of their boundaries so as to maintain and / or create visual harmony within and around the town.
- Good detailing of the principal elevations is important.
 - visual interest can be created by sensitive detailing of design,
 - incorporation of features such as well proportioned and well spaced windows,
 - the roof lines and chimneys,
 - carefully designed and detailed rainwater goods, ironmongery and other furniture.
- Their materials should harmonise with the materials and colours and appearance of surrounding buildings.
- Harshly coloured, smooth concrete or clay roof tiles, or pantiles, particularly when large and interlocking, do not sit comfortably with irregular roofs and hand made tiles of Eccleshall's older buildings.
- Bricks must reflect the predominant texture and lines of the older local brickwork.
 - light coloured, yellow, bright red bricks, bricks with smooth or shiny surfaces should not be used.
- White or pastel-coloured render may be a suitable finish for new buildings in older parts of the town.
- The principle issues raised in the section relating to the Conservation Area will apply equally to other areas of the town.

Trees

- There are few trees in the built up centre of Eccleshall, but suitable tree planting is to be encouraged in the surrounding areas as part of landscaping designs.
- Existing trees, hedgerows and walls should be protected and retained unless a good cause can be made to justify their removal and / or replacement.



The Conservation Area

The considerations set out earlier in **Guidelines for the Development of Eccleshall** and in **Guidelines for Building Development**, apply equally to the town's conservation area (see map). The issues raised in this section also apply to other areas of town, where appropriate.

Care will be taken to ensure that the appearance and the uses of buildings in the town centre conform to the considerations outlined below:

- Any new building and modifications to buildings will take account of the height, roof pitch, span and eaves depth of surrounding houses and will harmonise with the mellow appearance of surrounding buildings in terms of materials and colours used.
- **Buildings front directly onto the street**, except for parts of Stone Road.
Therefore,
 - Respect must be shown for historical frontages and building lines.

• Street frontages

- Vary from 3.3m to 18m long, the average being 9.5m.
- Are intricately varied and show detailed modifications made since they were built.
- In the High Street the colonnades of the Royal Oak and the Crown Surgery, and the first floor of the former town hall are prominent features. The design of the library and the new Co-operative store echoes them
- Include bay windows, some, Victorian shop fronts at pavement level, added at a date later than the original building.

Therefore,

- A continuous street façade should not exceed 14m
- Façades varied in terms of relief and detail are to be encouraged.

• Height of buildings

In the High Street and Castle Street there are both two and three storey buildings.

In Stone Road and Stafford Street, excluding the attic space, there are only two storey buildings.

Therefore,

- Only two or three storey buildings, depending on the particular location, will be permitted.

• Roofs

Are predominantly parallel to the street, are of plain clay tile, with pitches varying from 30° to 50° and

a common feature is the use of brick dentil and string courses just below the eaves

Therefore,

- Roof ridges should be parallel to the street
- Harsh coloured, smooth, concrete or clay tiles or pantiles, which are large and sometimes interlocking, do not sit comfortably with the irregular roofs and

handmade tiles of the existing old buildings and should not be used.

• Eaves

Heights vary from 4m to 9m, the use of brick dentil and string courses just below the eaves are a common feature

Therefore,

- New building or modification to existing building should reflect these features.

• Brick and Render

Brick is the predominant building material It is sometimes painted or rendered.

Therefore,

- In new works bricks must reflect the predominant texture and lines of older local brickwork.
- Light coloured, yellow or bright red bricks, or bricks with smooth shiny surfaces should not be used. They are not characteristic of their surroundings.
- White or pastel coloured render may well be a suitable alternative finish for new buildings.



- **Windows**

Are predominantly sash.

At the ground floor they tend to be taller than they are wide and vertically proportioned.

At first floor they tend to be square, or slightly horizontal, and of similar width to those below.

Full dormers are noticeable by their absence.

Therefore,

- New buildings or modification to existing buildings should reflect these designs.
- No full dormers should be permitted, half dormers may be acceptable.

- **Window Heads** are predominantly either wedge-shaped painted stone lintels, or wedge-shaped brickwork, or segmental brick arches.

Therefore,

- New building or modification to existing buildings should reflect these designs.

- **Visual interest** can be created by
 - Sensitive detailing of design.
 - The use of headers in brickwork is desirable
 - Incorporating features such as well proportioned and well spaced windows,
 - Roof lines, chimneys, eaves and carefully designed rainwater goods.

Street Furniture

- The provision of street furniture must be in keeping with, and take account of, the particular location of any building or development.
- It should have a style consistent with its neighbourhood. This is particularly true of the conservation area, but applies to other parts of the town as well.
- In the conservation area street furniture should include:
 - Black and white cast, or pressed, metal street name signs,
 - The use of heritage-style lighting columns and brackets,
 - Bollards and similar features made of traditional materials, timber and cast iron.
 - Footpaths and paved areas finished with traditional materials compatible with their surroundings,
 - In the High Street the use of stone paving, tegular paving, granite setts and blue bricks.
 - In other streets similar treatment to the High Street may well enhance them.
- Signs in the town should be hanging wherever possible, as opposed to being wall mounted and should be constructed from natural materials to complement the conservation area.
- The overhead telephone and electrical distribution poles should be replaced by underground cabling.



Highways and Traffic Guidelines

- The effect of any new development must be properly assessed for its impact on the existing road system and its capacity, and for its impact on residential areas.
- The geometry and road layouts and housing must meet in an integrated design which encourages an awareness of pedestrians and cyclists and which restrains the speed of traffic.

Car Parking

- There is limited public off road parking, but it is anticipated that the new development by the Co-op will provide substantial additional spaces for cars, behind the new store and accessible from Stone Road.
- Eccleshall benefits from parking in the High Street. This is a very valuable facility for shoppers and visitors. Other parking is available on Stafford Street and Stone Road.
- The restricted width of the High Street does represent a safety feature for pedestrians in so far as it discourages speeding or other forms of careless driving.
- The inconvenience to traffic flow presented when heavy lorries meet in the High Street and are unable to pass one another is far outweighed by the need for and usefulness of the on street parking.
- Any significant future development in the central area should provide adequate off street car parking, including public parking if appropriate.

Sources of Advice for Design, Specification and Materials

The Civic Trust

Essex Hall, 1 – 6 Essex Street, London, WC2R 3HU.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England

128, Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SW.

English Heritage

PO Box 569, Swindon, SN2 2YR.

The Georgian Group

6, Fitzroy Square, London, W1P 6DX.

Institute of Historic Building Conservation

Jubilee House, High Street, Tisbury, Wiltshire. SP3 6HA.

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

37, Spital Square, London, E1 6DY.

Stafford Borough Council's Conservation Officer

Civic Offices, Riverside, Stafford. ST16 3AQ.

The Victorian Society

1, Priory Gardens, Bedford Park, London. W4 1TT.

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

Canal Street, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 4LU.

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This document may also be viewed on the Parish Council website
www.eccleshallparishcouncil.org

Further copies of this booklet can be obtained from:

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Tel: 01785 850989 Email : chris@dheelis.fsnet.co.uk

Eccleshall Library
Tel: 01785 850452 email: eccleshall.library@staffordshire.gov.uk





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