Trefonen, Treflach & Nantmawr

Looking forward

Building our community and heritage

October 2006

The Village Design Statement for Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr

Foreword:

Why have we produced a Design Statement?

In late summer 2004 the Oswestry Rural Parish Council circulated a questionnaire to all households in the parish as the basis of developing a Parish Plan. The findings of the residents' questionnaire were summarized and delivered to each home in autumn 2005, followed by a meeting in Trefonen Village Hall on 10th November 2005. At that meeting the following items were raised and discussed:

- the creation of a Parish web-site
- the identification, promotion and protection of our heritage, both natural and built
- the provision of activities to engage younger members of the community
- the consideration of employment generation
- the improvement of local transport.

From this meeting emerged a group of people interested in exploring the heritage of the village and putting together a design statement. Since then people have been researching and collecting information on our area and a steering group of nearly twenty people has been driving the project forward.

The group has been ably supported by many local residents and at the Trefonen Hillwalk Weekend, 26 - 29 May 2006, the second draft of the Statement and Proposals were formally presented to the community for comment and discussion.

What follows is the attempt of many people to look at how our community has evolved, what is special about it, what is characteristic of our natural and built environment, and what matters to people here.

The Statement then looks forward and makes proposals for the future. The aim is that future development should preserve our local identity, promote high quality and ensure the continuance and growth of a vibrant, caring and self-sufficient community.

The three settlements

It was agreed that this Statement would cover the three settlements of Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr. While each has some specific characteristics, within the Oswestry Rural Parish they constitute a unit and share many activities and interests. The settlements have a total population of some 1,300 people, with Trefonen, much the largest, being seen by the residents of Treflach and Nantmawr as their focal point for local services – shops, PO, primary school, village hall, and church.

What next?

The Statement and its 75 recommendations were considered and adopted as policy by Oswestry Rural Parish Council on 25 August 2006. In submitting it now to Oswestry Borough Council, we are seeking the adoption of relevant recommendations as planning guidance, and for inclusion in the Local Development Framework. We have been sensitive throughout to the current consultations on the LDF and seek in particular to contribute to

Spatial Objective 8

To protect, conserve and enhance the quality of the natural, historic and built environment ..., with the highest level of protection for the most valued landscapes, buildings and natural resources.

Spatial Objective 10

To protect the countryside from inappropriate development and ensure that any new development within rural areas, its design, scale and location, is in keeping and sensitive to the character and local distinctiveness of the area.

Spatial Objective 13

To promote thriving, inclusive and sustainable rural communities, ensuring that people who live or work in rural areas ... have access to a range of facilities and services.

Spatial Objective 14

To support rural enterprise and diversification of the rural economy where proposals are appropriate in their scale and nature with the character of their location.

Spatial Objective 15

To promote good design and layout in all new development, ensuring that developments respond to their local context, create safe, accessible and attractive places and make efficient use of resources.

Issues and Options Report Oswestry Borough Council - December 2005

Other recommendations are included for the consideration of other authorities, as appropriate, such as the County Council, British Telecom, and also the local community. There was a very strong commitment to bringing this Statement to fruition. Its implementation is in the hands of the local authorities and those people who live in Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr.

September 2006

From a policy perspective, the Council is seeking to put in place a Local Development Framework that is more responsive to local opinions about planning and development and what is wanted in the area. Para 1.22 Oswestry Borough Local Development Framework

Statement of Community Involvement

February 2005

Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr

The starting points: The landscape & the past

The settlements of Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr developed in the north-western corner of Shropshire, between three to five miles from the market town of Oswestry. They are situated in the area designated as the Oswestry Uplands (*Countryside Agency – Joint Character Areas*) and all of the countryside immediately surrounding them has been designated as an Area of Special Landscape Character in the current Local Development Plan. They nestle between the Shropshire Plain and the Welsh Hills. It is considered a prime example of a dramatic landscape marking the transition from lowland to upland. The highest point is a hill above Trefonen at 341 metres, and the lowest point is at 135 metres in Nantmawr. The difference causes the roads and lanes to be steep and twisting, but it also contributes to the many spectacular views in and out of the settlements.

Above: Trefonen Brook valley
Bottom Right: From Mynydd Myfyr

Trefonen lies close under the eastern slope of a ridge running roughly north-south to the west of Oswestry to the spectacular viewpoint of the Moelydd, which looks over the Tanat Valley. The nearby summit of Mynydd Myfyr (height 341 metres; 1118 feet) is just over a mile from the village centre. From both the Moelydd and Mynydd Myfyr there are clear views across Trefonen.

To the west, a little over half the village is sited on the hillside, whereas the remainder, to the east of the main road, is bounded by open and flatter farmland with views stretching into the distance over north Shropshire. However, a major topographical feature of the village is the field-lined valley to the south along which runs a stream, referred to as the Trefonen Brook. The valley cut by the Trefonen Brook between the village and Treflach is of significant landscape value, and views along the line of the brook in both directions are outstanding. Parts of the village, particularly along the north side of the Brook lie on the rather dark Cefn-y-Fedw sandstone which outcrops in Martins Fields and a number of other places in the valley. This quite steep slope forms a definitive natural boundary to the village. The Brook runs all the year round: it is not a seasonal "bourn".
The Environment Agency has designated the Trefonen Brook and parts of the adjacent fields as liable to flooding and there has been significant flash-flooding as recently as November 2005. An area of mixed woodland, Bwyltai

Wood, of particular natural and wildlife importance, lies on the southern slope of the valley very near to the village.

Left: Trefonen Brook
Below: - after heavy rain

Above: View across the Shropshire Plain from Trefonen

Treflach is of a different physical character from Trefonen. It nestles in the folds in the landscape and the village is almost hidden by trees. It has many exposed limestone ridges and evidence of former quarrying activities. Apart from a few outlying houses and farms, the main settlement is along the road running from Oswestry towards the Tanat Valley. It lies to the east of, and is sheltered by, the prominent hill known as the Moelydd. The Trefonen Brook Valley forms a distinct division between the settlements of Treflach and Trefonen.

Nantmawr is built along the steeply sloping road running down towards the Tanat Valley and many of the dwellings have the advantage of wide views across the valley towards Llanyblodwel and Blodwel Rocks. Most properties lie on the steep hillside rising to the Moelydd. The valley itself is of glacial origin and cuts through old rock formations until it narrows in the east near Porth-y-waen and southwards towards Llanymynech.

The importance of what lies below

The settlements developed on the southern limit of the North Wales coalfield, which lies on top of carboniferous limestone and Cefn-y-Fedw sandstone. This explains why from the early eighteenth century the population expanded so dramatically to exploit the small scale coal mines and limestone quarries.

Above: Ty Tegwch
Right: Nantmawr Quarry

Trefonen became the largest village with its houses clustered under the hill and its inhabitants working the coal mines, local pottery and brickworks, limestone quarries and the small lead workings. Treflach and Nantmawr's population grew more slowly. Nevertheless, the number of people involved in these activities was considerable. The quarries constitute significant landmark features in Treflach and Nantmawr and their future use, particularly in Nantmawr, is a major concern.

Although coal mining was mainly centred on Morda and Gronwen, there were two mines in Trefonen, the last of which shut down in 1891. At its peak in the middle of the nineteenth century it is recorded that more than 300 people were employed in over twenty pits. Traces of the mining activity can be found in a number of places, in particular to the east of the playing field off School Lane. Although there does not appear to be any relevant indication, it is possible that the areas around the old pits may be subject to subsidence. Little evidence remains of Howell's brickworks, situated on the field opposite the Rectory in Trefonen, other than ornamental tombstones in Trefonen Churchyard and an impressive house in Treflach, Ty Tegwch

The rural context

After this period of mining and quarrying, the area returned to its rural roots and agriculture as its main economic activity. Farms and small holdings dominated the countryside and sheep and cattle rearing flourished.

But two settlements of the three have declined. As has been the case in many parts of the countryside in England, some communities have changed significantly. At one time Treflach had a Methodist Chapel, a village hall known as the Coffee or Cocoa Rooms, two public houses, a petrol pump and a shop. The chapel and one of the public houses have been converted into domestic residences. The village hall was demolished and is now a tiny village green, not suitable for ball games. Very few of the quarry workers' cottages have survived. The petrol pump is no longer there and the shop and post office closed in 2006. In Nantmawr, the public house, the school, chapel, post office and shop have all gone. Such trends have been evident in many small English villages in recent decades.

English or Welsh?

Over the centuries Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr fluctuated between England and Wales, the names Nantmawr and Cefn Blodwel being examples of Welsh presence. In the 8th century Offa's Dyke was built to form the boundary between Mercia and Wales. Small sections of the original dyke can be found adjacent to Chapel Lane and the Barley Mow pub in Trefonen, and there are a number of more substantial lengths in the middle of Treflach, adjacent to Blodwel Bank and north of Nantmawr. In any case of development in the future, it is most important that these parts of one of Britain's most significant ancient monuments should be preserved. The much-used modern long distance footpath – Offa's Dyke Path – runs right through the centre of Trefonen and is an important feature of the village from the tourism, and consequently economic, point of view.

Trefonen is shown on maps published in the early 1800s as a hamlet with the Welsh name of Carneddau. Trefonen, roughly translated as *the place or hamlet of the ash*, appears to be a later name, but although it is allegedly English, it seems more likely that it has its roots in the Brithonnic language which preceded Welsh. Treflach used to be called Treflach Wood and this is reflected in the names around: Quarry Wood, Middle Forest, Lower Forest, Forest Cottages, Pleasant Grove, Dummy Wood.

Some key dates:

Prehistoric and Roman Activity:

Late Neolithic and early Bronze Age activity has been recorded in Treflach. Two standing stones were recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey map, although they had been removed by the 1970s, and there is also a barrow, probably a burial site.

A hoard of Roman coins, dating to the late first century A.D. was found in Wern Lane, Treflach Wood, during the 19th century.

757 – 796 **The construction of Offa's Dyke, a mixture of natural barriers and an earthwork.**

1272 **Trefonen is mentioned in the Domesday Book (to 1300?) as having an obligation to keep the lord's hounds.**

Medieval and early post-medieval

Woodland was cleared. There was piecemeal quarrying of limestone for use in agriculture and in the iron industry and lead and copper were mined.

1650 The farm which eventually became the Gibraltar Inn in Treflach was built. It was first licensed in 1705. The name is said to refer to the Rock of Gibraltar, taken over by the British in 1705, or because the pub was built on solid rock. It closed in 1990.

1720 The Malthouse (and Efel Inn?) were built and linked by a tunnel. Unusually the ale was brewed over coal rather than wood.

1760 The foundations of the Barley Mow in Trefonen were built by Abraham Pryse of Oswestry.

1795 The Calvinistic Methodist Chapel was built In Little London Lane.

1821 All Saints' Church was built in Trefonen, in the diocese of St Asaph. The earl of Powis donated two acres of land. Initially all services were in Welsh.

1825 A school room was built on land next to the church, with a house for the master.

1832 Carneddau Independent Chapel was built.

1842 The Parish of Trefonen was formed on 27th August, comprising Trefonen, Treflach and Trefarclawdd.

1855 A parsonage was built on the glebe land next to the church.

1867 The school was enlarged, at a cost of £220, and by 1876 there were nearly 170 pupils.

1870s Mr. Dumville Lees, benefactor, paid for the organ, helped to set up the band, and funded the building of a Mission Room in Treflach.

1875 A Temperance Society was formed. By 1877 there were over 80 members. The mine owners let it be known 'no teetotallers would be employed'. The drum and fife band and a successful football team were started. During the winter months there was a night school.

1905 A fire at the school meant that the Band Box had to be used as a school room for about 18 months.

1991 Trefonen Village Hall opened.

Above: The Malthouse
Right: Barn at Wulfruna Cottage

2006: the present.
The characteristics of the settlements and their communities –

The natural environment – why people live here

The Oswestry Rural Parish questionnaire summary, published in autumn 2005, records that the most frequently given reason for living here is *love of country life*. And the two highest number of responses to what people liked about living here were: *enjoy the peace and quiet* and *enjoy the rural views and country location*. The landscape of hills and many trees and the livestock agricultural activity contribute significantly to this area of Special Landscape Character, greatly treasured by local people.

The area mostly comprises farmland, surrounded by hedges that are occasionally punctuated by mature trees. These can be oak, sycamore, beech, elder, horse chestnut and ash. The latter abounded in the area at one time as Trefonen's name is derived from these, Onnen meaning ash tree and Tref meaning town.

Wild flowers bloom in the hedgerows and the meadows. Where roadside verges have not been eroded by traffic comfrey proliferates. Honeysuckle and goose grass festoon many of the hedges and lichen can be seen in the hawthorn hedges in winter. Lichen growing on the old trees also indicates that the local air is fairly unpolluted.

Nantmawr has a quarry, now mostly left to become overgrown where orchids and quaking grass flourish. Throughout the year there is a continual showing of wild flowers, snowdrops on banks in the spring, followed by primroses and violets. As spring continues into summer the lanes are dancing with Queen Anne's Lace (cow parsley), deadnettle, toadflax, campion, knapweed, so much variety.

As this area is not aggressively farmed the natural environment is not too disrupted. Rabbits, hedgehogs, stoats and foxes can be seen. Bird species are numerous and there is great excitement when swallows reappear and the plaintive cry of curlews is heard. Buzzards nest in one of the huge oak trees that's surrounded by sycamores. Hunting owls hoot as they swoop over the fields at dusk. Many gardens are home to families of blue tits, finches, wagtails, blackbirds and robins. A heron can often be seen wading along Trefonen brook seeking prey.

March 2006

Many trees enrich the area, particularly oaks, beeches, ash, chestnuts and sycamores, and numerous veteran trees in hedgerows and pastures everywhere. There are several patches of mixed deciduous woodlands of antiquity, such as Givern Treflach and Bwlytai Wood. The latter, an area of particular natural and wildlife importance, lies on the southern slope of the Trefonen Brook valley very near to the village and has recently been transferred in trust to the Shropshire Wildlife Trust by the wife of a former Rector of All Saints' Parish. The wood is a particularly varied habitat which is used for educational purposes by the pupils of Trefonen Primary School.

Old wood pasture and unimproved grassland, species-rich hedgerows, banks and verges, scrub habitat and wet meadows are all in evidence. In the hedgerows wild gooseberries and raspberries can be found and strawberries in Middle Forest. Frog orchids, autumn lady's tresses, pyramidal orchids, stinking hellebores, spurge laurel, and carex muricata ssp muricata (a rare sedge growing in only about six locations in the U.K.) are all reported.

Wild life abounds and the quarries, streams and brooks are important habitats. Peregrine falcons and Grayling butterflies (normally a coastal species) breed in Nantmawr Quarry and a pool there is a breeding ground for great crested newts. Jones's Rough in Nantmawr, managed by Shropshire Wildlife Trust, is home to rare butterflies. There are a number of SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) in the area. At the northern end of Treflach the road rock quarry still exists. It has been used by the Council as a dump, but local people still hope to see the plans to turn it into a nature reserve come to fruition. Great crested newts are reported to be in the pool there. The pool at Trefarclawdd is the only large area of still water, a home for water birds, frogs, amphibians, dragon flies and others. Trefonen Brook and its tributaries constitute an important corridor for wildlife, including the aquatic.

1	Pool at Treferclawdd with breeding water birds, frogs, probably amphibians and dragonflies present	2	Stream and tributaries through Trefonen. Important corridor for wildlife including occasional aquatic dippers
3	Wet meadowland fairly unimproved, good for plant diversity. Extensive damp grassland and pools useful for wildlife	4	Unimproved species-rich grassland with Frog Orchids and Autumn Lady's tresses
5	Old wood pasture and unimproved grassland	6	Old species-rich hedgerow and hedge bank sheltering a good diversity of wild flowers
7	Mixed deciduous patches of woodland of antiquity (with some coniferous planting)	8	Verges with good plant diversity abound, topped with mixed hedgerows
9	Extensive scrub habitat	10	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
11	Great crested common and palmate newts and slow worms	12	Dry species-rich grassland and marsh
13	Old quarry with pool	14	Toad crossing
15	Important unimproved species-rich hill pasture	16	Old quarry, species-rich grassland, stream and good verges
17	All the fields at this junction are excellent unimproved species-rich limestone grassland		There are numerous veteran trees, fields and hedgerows everywhere. Roadside verges and hedgerows are species-rich. All streams and brooks are important

The main communication networks

From Oswestry to the Tanat Valley

Above:
Trefonen "The Cross"
Left: In to Nantmawr

Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr are joined by the main thoroughfare from Oswestry to the Tanat Valley. This is an unclassified road, which in addition to carrying local traffic acts as a short cut, or rat run, to and from Oswestry to the Tanat Valley, avoiding the longer route via Llynclys. It runs first through the middle of Trefonen. A mile further on Treflach sits astride the road and the right hand fork on the way out of the village leads down the steep lane through Nantmawr to a T-junction with the B4396 over a mile further on. On leaving Oswestry the road is single carriageway with a continuous footway on one side to Trefonen. On leaving Trefonen the road appears to become narrower, there being no footway and the verges being steep in places. Over recent years the verges have been significantly eroded by passing vehicles putting pedestrians greatly at risk. There is a single footway through Treflach, but Nantmawr has no such facility and as the road is narrow and steep, bounded in many places by walls and hedgerows, residents feel very exposed to accident. In 2005 the modification of speed limits through the short stretches of Trefonen and Treflach should have eased the situation, but this is a country road and concerns for people's safety and the protection of the verges are still very real issues locally. The only other road of any importance is Blodwel Bank, a left-hand fork when leaving Treflach and going south, which leads to the A495. As its name suggest, it is steep, and local people know it must be avoided when there is snow or ice. There are no east–west routes.

Our footpaths

The rich network of footpaths, a particular and greatly valued feature of the area, contributes daily to the life of local people and constitutes a formidable tourist attraction.

Our amazing national network of public footpaths is protected by law, but we must still be vigilant.

We have approximately sixty footpaths in and around our village, which in many cases give an indication of the historical local industrial scene, for example, footpaths leading to and from the old coal mining sites on the eastern end of the Trefonen playing fields from Coed-y-go and Gronwen, and Sun Hill on the western aspect. Brick making was also a thriving industry in the Trefonen / Coed-y-go area. Footpaths and bridleways were used by these industrial workers who were mainly local people, to walk from their homes to their place of work. Remnants of these by-gone industries can still be seen today when walking our footpaths, as can the quarry workers' cottages at Treflach and Nantmawr. Blodwell and Nantmawr quarries took over the industrial scene when the coal seams ran out.

Farming has always been a mainstay of this area and employed many local people, hence the number of footpaths crossing farmland and leading directly into the farmyards. In some cases the importance of a farm, i.e. its acreage and number of tenant farmers, can still be determined by the number of footpaths and / or bridleways converging in the farmyard, usually from north, south, east and west.

Our footpaths are appreciated by local people who wish to enjoy the peace, tranquillity and beautiful countryside, be it for the pleasure of walking, keeping fit, bird watching, photography, dog walking, quiet contemplation or for the purpose for which they were originally intended, to get from one place to another.

We also have visitors and walking groups who come some distance to enjoy our footpaths. The Offa's Dyke long distance footpath traverses the village centre. Many foreign visitors walking this take B & B in the village, use our local shop and pub, bringing some revenue into the local economy. This will be increased as more B & B and meals at the pub become available.

The Ramblers' Association's aim is to have all footpaths in England and Wales walked by R.A. members between March 2006 and September 2007 with missing or damaged way-markers replaced, and blocked stiles and paths recorded and reported to the relevant county council in order that remedial work can be carried out. When this is completed, all footpaths will be more easily accessible as will areas of Open Access land. Our local area of Open Access land is on the southern side of the Moelydd. Offa's Dyke Path allows access to the summit, from which superb 360° views can be enjoyed.

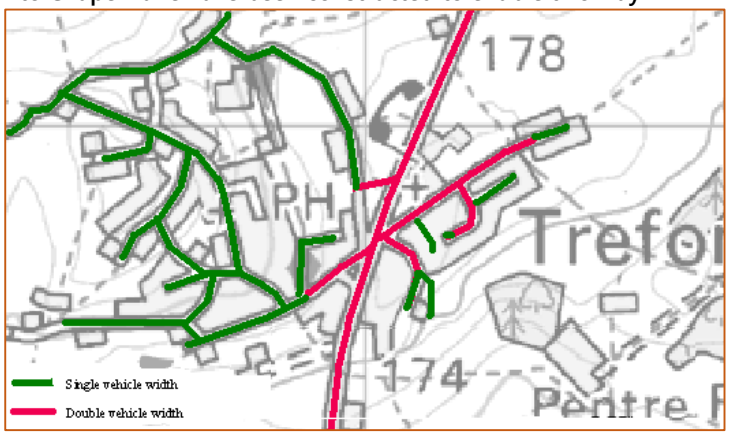
March 2006

The built environment

Trefonen Village – Has it been over-developed?

The settlement of Trefonen nestles on a south easterly facing hill and the slopes at its foot. It hugs the landscape, being built on layers of rock and away from the flooding Trefonen Brook. With the exception of the Oswestry to Nantmawr road, only Old Post Office Lane and Chapel Lane lead anywhere. There are no through roads; narrow roads and lanes characterise the settlement.

To the west they fan out up the hill, changing almost immediately from two car to single car width, on to unmetalled track and finally into footpaths where stout footwear is required. These lanes have no footways and all have steep banked grass verges topped with walls of local stone – visually attractive and historically important, but difficult for pedestrians if there is any traffic. To the east the roads end abruptly as sharp drops in the rock are encountered or meadows liable to flooding are approached. Although School Lane, Brooklea Close, the beginning of Martins Fields and the new link road extension to Chapel Lane have been constructed to enable two way passage of traffic, the lack of off road parking in School Lane, and the access to the primary school, in effect reduce this to a single carriageway. There are several un-adopted lanes. Throughout the village there are footpaths leading across the fields and open spaces, often a reminder of previous industrial activity, such as the coal mine or the quarries. The existence of four chapels or churches in the village is a strong reminder of the former Welsh Borders community.



The village has far and rural views. From all points there is a vista, and houses and gardens are often orientated to take advantage of this. The rural setting is emphasised by the evidence of small holdings, as well as farms, everywhere. This is not a dormitory village.

Above: Cul-de-sac and narrow lanes

Trefonen is not perhaps a chocolate box view, but it is still a visually pleasing one.Viewed from the Treflach Road, the hillside appears a densely packed hotchpotch of trees and old cottages with newer houses shoehorned between. No single style predominates and, with one or two notable exceptions, they nestle comfortably together. Density peters out to the west as the hillside becomes steeper and more thickly wooded. The outstanding feature is the great variety: the houses differ in age, style and construction materials, although white rendered walls are very evident. The layout is the result of a natural evolutionary process. In the last twenty years, with significant development in Woodland View, Martins Fields, Brooklea Close and Chapel View, there has been much expansion of the housing stock. While the variety and relatively low density are appreciated, the imposition of open plan features on much of these recent developments is the subject of adverse comment. It is seen as inappropriate, detracting from the Borders identity and rural nature of the village. In contrast, the dwellings in School Lane, with their gardens enclosed by hedges and fences, are more obviously characteristic of a village environment.

As in many villages in England, the number of dwellings has exploded in the last fifty years, and particularly in the last twenty. The maps of 1881, 1954 and the present day show these changes dramatically. However, unlike many parts of the country, this village enjoys a very well balanced housing stock. There are small & large dwellings, houses and bungalows. They are privately owned, shared equity, let through housing associations and the council, or as holiday accommodation. **Responses to the recent Rural Parish Council questionnaire showed an overwhelming view that there should be no further development**. The rapid recent expansion of the village has led to many believing it now to be over-developed. In the older parts of the settlement, old and new have blended well together. There is confidence that in time the same will be true of the more recent developments if allowed and encouraged to age into their natural surroundings.

Above: Open plan housing

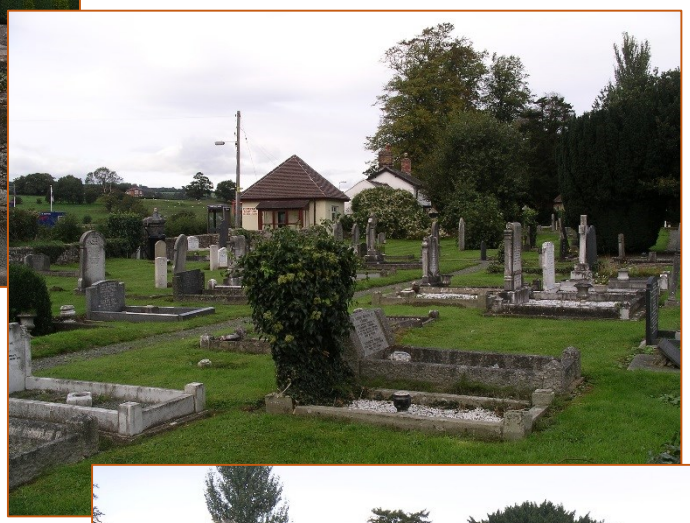
Above: School Lane

A large scale aerial photograph of the village shows clearly that the present settlement has a well-defined physical boundary which fits well with the surrounding landscape. The photograph also emphasises the importance that stone walls adjoining roads and lanes have in defining the limits of the village. The village has expanded to its boundary and it is now difficult to avoid the conclusion that Trefonen is fully developed.

The village centre:
Where is it and what characterises it?

The centre is the area on either side of the main road through the village which includes All Saints' Church, the Barley Mow public house and its micro-brewery, the Band Box / hairdresser's, the war memorial and grass beside it, the surrounding houses and the shop and post office. It is characterised by a mixture of community buildings and houses, a mixture of white rendered and slate roofed and the more recent brick. It is made particularly attractive by the older white rendered buildings, the stone walls, the tall, mature trees and the sense of purposeful space.

All the roads and lanes running off the main road are at different angles, enhancing the attractiveness of the centre and avoiding the harsh impact of a crossroad. The eye is taken to small roads which curve away and limit the view. While the immediate centre appears flat, it is visually attractive because the land rises and falls around it. The road now has speed restrictions on it, and at the moment is not really seen as just a road through a village. The risk of its being seen as splitting the village, particularly socially, must be minimised at all costs. The pub, the shop and the post office are well established parts of the rural community and valuable assets to the retention of its identity. They are also a focus for tourists.



Above: Barley Mow Inn
Right: Band Box and Cemetery
Below Right: War Memorial
Below: School lane

Housing - and its characteristics

The outstanding feature of the houses of Trefonen is their great variety, in age, style and design, and construction material. Diversity is the predominant, strong feature.

Above: Wulfruna Cottage

Although there were a few farms and isolated dwellings in the area where the village now stands, for example the 250 year old part of the house known as The Carven (Rectory Close) and Dingle Cottage (Bellan Lane), which is of similar age, the village as an integrated community is relatively young. There are a few old houses of exposed stone, but most are rendered and painted white.

Some recent development has continued this trend, a move which is welcomed. Newer brick houses are of varying colours, and there is, sadly, nothing to show of the locally made bricks. Roof lines, both slate and tile, are well broken with a fair proportion of gable ends and dormer windows on view. The brick corbels which feature on quite a number of the more recent houses are a small detail which enhances properties. The same is true of some other recent development, with detail in brick work, or around windows, lifting design and adding interest. Only the most recent development on the car park of the former Efel Inn defies these trends, particularly in its unrelieved mass and roof line, and it was the subject of huge local anger.

Left: The attractive detail of Church Cottages

With the exception of three recently developed areas, properties are enclosed by low walls, built of local stone (usually found in the garden), or by hedges. Even where there is open plan development, it is possible to see how some residents have sought to use the local stone in their gardens, thus stamping a local feel on their homes.

Gates, driveways and pathways are generally well maintained and fit well into the rural environment. There appear to be many keen gardeners in the area and one of the features of the gardens is the exploitation of the outstanding views.

Services

The village has one shop, which includes a post office (currently with limited opening hours), and which is advertised as a tourist information point. It is open seven days a week. There is one public house, the Barley Mow, which benefits from a recently opened mini-brewery in a small barn beside the pub. It sits on Offa's Dyke, being to the best of our knowledge, the only pub actually on the Dyke. There are plans to provide food in the near future and planning permission for an extension to incorporate B&B accommodation. The further promotion of tourism could be focussed on these two facilities.

There is a ladies' and gentlemen's hairdresser's situated in the old Band Box, next to the church and graveyard.

Trefonen Church of England Primary School is situated in School Lane and currently has 140 pupils aged 4 to 11. It has been extended from the original building in various phases and its roof line constitutes an interesting architectural feature. The school occupies a roughly triangular site, wedged between All Saints' Church and the Village Hall. It has no car parking, a serious consideration, but enjoys an informal arrangement with the Village Hall. Clearly there could be times when there would be a conflict of interests. There is a lay-by outside the school and a School Travel Plan has been produced in an attempt to address safety and other issues.

Trefonen Primary School

All Saints' Church

All Saints' Church, in the centre of the village, has a large regular congregation and there are weekly services. In March 2006 a new parish office and balcony meeting room were opened, the latter being available for hire to the community.

Carneddau Chapel, in Old Post Office Lane has services on the first, third and fifth Sunday of the month, usually in Welsh.

Trefonen and Sychtyn Village Hall, next to the school, was further extended in 2005. It is a modern, well equipped and well used facility, being the base each week day for the pre-school provision. There is a recycling facility in the corner of the car park, operated by Oswestry Borough Council, who own and maintain the adjacent playing fields. Young people in the village secured funding for the erection of two goalposts and nets in 2004 and in June 2005 a kick wall was installed using £9,000 Section 106 funding from the Chapel View residential development. A well-equipped and bright toddlers' play area is located on the north eastern corner of the playing fields; it includes two picnic benches and has self-closing gates.

Above: The Kick Wall

Above: The Play Area

The hole in the wall type of post box at the corner of Bellan Lane, in the centre of the village, is a local landmark - and the only public post box in the village. It is a Victorian box, much treasured, although its opening is too small to take some modern envelopes. Most people hand these in for collection at the village shop / post office.

Treflach Village – Is it losing its services?

Unlike Trefonen, which can be seen from a considerable distance, the settlement of Treflach is not readily visible until driving into the village from its northern or southern approaches on the main road, although the Royal Oak public house can be seen from the hillside area of Trefonen.

Above: Big Bellan Covert

Exceptional outward views over the Welsh mountains and the Severn – Vrynwy – Tanat and Cain valleys are gained from the south west. After passing the entrance to Treflach Quarry, Offa's Dyke is clearly visible as the village is approached from Trefonen. It is set back a few metres from the road and crosses the field, being cut off at the entrance to Oak Lane.

There are significant trees which protect the village from being seen from many aspects. Indeed, they almost totally obscure the view during summer months, and they constitute an important feature of the settlement. As is common in this area of special landscape value groups of trees are common and special. This has been enhanced in recent years by tree planting on the Big Bellan Covert near Ty Tegwch.

The impression is that the majority of homes are strung out along the main road, with glimpses of a few lanes and private roads leading to individual properties set further back. There is a focal point, the Green, at the cross roads with Gibraltar Lane and Stoney Lane. The Green was formerly the site of the village meeting room; a seat and phone box are now provided here.

In April 2006, on the closure of the post office, the village post box was moved to the Green. While this old box is visually attractive and local people wish to keep it, it does not accommodate some of today's larger envelopes and it is the only such facility in the village. The old chapel, now converted into a house, sits on the corner and, set back from the main road, on the west side, is a row of three cottages. These and the cottages outside the village at the end of Stoney Lane, Bwlychygwynt, are a reminder of the importance of the quarries in Treflach's history. Offa's Close, a recent development of nine houses on a brown field site, follows the line of a former limestone quarry face.

Housing - and its characteristics

There is a mixture of old and new properties in Treflach and of houses, cottages and bungalows. Outside the present development boundary are isolated properties of some significance, being the former dwellings of farmers or agricultural workers, or of quarry overseers. These include the old properties of Wern Cottage, Thornhill and the very old Ty Gwyn, with its special windows to the north west, and Underhill and Pleasant Grove to the south east. Two of the older properties are particularly important because of the building materials used in their construction. Some way from the village is Ty Tegwch (beautiful house) built of Trefonen bricks with blue brick features. Within the village are Wyddn House and Wyddn Cottage built of Welsh stone, dressed and carted from the village of Llanwyddn, now below Lake Vyrnwy.

The houses and bungalows of Treflach are all individual and they sit comfortably within their plots. There are no examples of recent development of rows of houses of the same design, which can blight the landscape in some rural areas. This diversity is not characterized by the predominance of any particular building materials. Nevertheless, local people appreciate the sensitive way in which some owners have sought to extend older properties, blending old stone with brick and using wooden window frames. Residents also seek to continue the local feature of properties being hidden by trees and take advantage of any naturally occurring slopes to enable a property to be well sited in its garden.

The overall impression is of a rural hamlet, with some recent development, which nestles in its surrounding countryside. There are some outstanding planning permissions and a few sites within or adjoining the current development boundary which some residents consider could be usefully allowed for houses, particularly if they would replace the rather unsightly present activity on them. The issue is access, particularly from Oak Lane, where the junction with the main road and the proximity of Offa's Dyke have to be accommodated.

Above: The Royal Oak

Treflach now has the Royal Oak public house as its only permanent public service. The pub currently includes a restaurant and has land adjoining it which could be considered for additional public facilities and car parking.

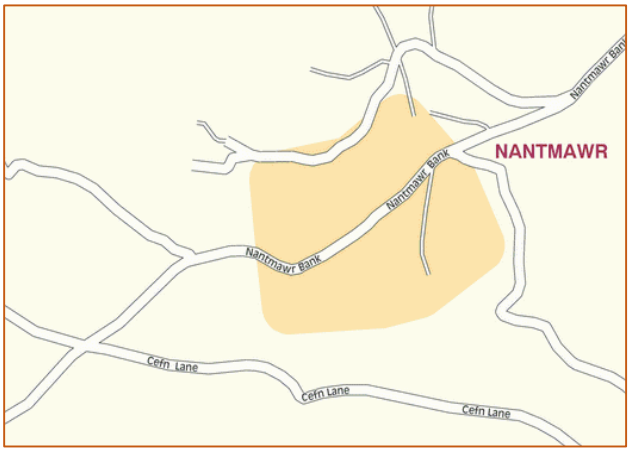
Nantmawr Village – Are dark clouds gathering?

Nantmawr is a hamlet which one comes across almost unexpectedly, on following the road south from Treflach. It is situated mainly in a deep valley (hence its name) with most dwellings on the southern facing slopes benefiting from sunshine most of the day, but from spectacular views all the time! Historically the village was based on a combination of agriculture and quarrying. Quarrying ceased some twenty-five years ago and farming now dominates, although most farmsteads are relatively small units with cattle and sheep being the main income producers. The core of the village is now purely residential.

The road through the village increasingly feels like a lane and as it falls away the houses on each side appear to cling to the hillside. This unclassified road is clearly rural, narrow, in many parts steep and with a few potentially dangerous bends. There are no pavements and the steep verges and stone boundary walls mean that pedestrians feel particularly exposed to risk. The road is reported to carry some 1000 vehicles per day and has no speed limit, other than the national 60 m.p.h. for single carriageways. The angle of the disused incline plane from the quarry with its bridge over the road emphasises the impact of the depth and gradient of the road

Disused lime kilns and the quarry are reminders of the past, and the future use of the quarry is of very real concern to local residents. For many a dark cloud currently hangs over the village, and its neighbouring settlements, in the form of a planning application lodged with Shropshire County Council to transport 150,000 tons of waste material into the quarry, turning it into a major landfill site. The objections to it are based on serious ecological and environmental concerns, on the huge threat to people's safety, and on whether there is any proven need for the activity. Clearly the roads will not accommodate the expected HGV movements. The adverse impact on the roads, verges and surrounding countryside has already been observed during the last eighteen months when there have been motorised events in the Quarry, since its closure as a mountain bike centre.

Offa's Dyke Path passes through the village, with the Dyke itself being clearly visible just to the north.



Above: Incline plane crossing the road

The Cambrian Railway Society is in the course of reopening a short length of line, about one mile of track, from Blodwel to Nantmawr. Visitors to this line will bring additional tourists to the area and appropriate arrangements for traffic management and the protection of the rural environment will be needed.

Housing - and its characteristics

Many dwellings are strung out along the main road in a ribbon development, with a few other dwellings on the two or three lanes off the main route. Quarry Lane also has some sixteen dwellings along its length. It is notable that many of the houses along the main road are built close to the road with little or no garden between them and the carriageway. These are clearly affected by any increase in traffic.

The houses are predominantly older houses, many refurbished, with only eight houses built in the last thirty years. All houses are different with the exception of two new houses which are a mirror image of each other and a row of six ex-quarry workers' cottages. There are only three bungalows and all properties are owner occupied, with the exception of the row of cottages and one other, which are rented. Two houses are owned by 'weekenders' with the remainder being occupied full-time.

Building materials vary considerably. There is some brick, including yellow, many rendered walls and a few houses of stone. Slate is almost exclusively used for roofing. Some stone walls exist, but hedges predominate as boundaries.

Services – an issue

Over the last thirty years Nantmawr has lost its school, chapel, shop and post office and, even further back, its public house. There is no building which constitutes a focal point in the village and this, together with the fact that dwellings are quite widely scattered means that there is a real risk of it losing its identity. However, a community spirit exists; many local residents know each other well and share in activities. The visit of the mobile library, for five minutes, constitutes an important focus for meeting up with others! Some local people wonder whether a limited amount of new development would inject further life into the community.

A major characteristic: Walls – the predominant boundary markers- and news of a great discovery: the stone hedge

The most frequent style of property boundary is the stone wall, built using the distinctive local sandstone or limestone. In fact, almost every house in the higher part of Trefonen, whether modern or old, has a stone wall of some sort, as part or all of its boundary. The older walls are of dry-stone construction, whereas many of the newer ones are mortared. Properties which do not have walls inevitably have hedges, either mixed or the more recently planted conifer.

Many of these walls appear to have hedges growing on top of them. Closer examination reveals that these are retaining walls built against a bank, presumably to help prevent erosion where the level of the road or path is lower than the property being enclosed. The term *stone hedge* is used for these free standing stone-faced earth banks, with hedges on top.

They are most common in Cornwall and Devon and the coastal areas of Wales, and to a lesser degree in Cumbria. In North Wales stone hedges are known as *clawdd* (singular) or *cloddiau* (plural). Authorities such as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) suggest that examples in good condition are few and far between.

One of the more important aspects of stone hedges is their wildlife role, as their earth core can be a haven for small mammals, and their faces an important habitat for plants and invertebrates. Stone hedges are more valuable than dry stone walls as habitats, as the earth core helps sustain a wider range of plants and animals.

BTCV Dry Stone Walling

Many of the older field boundaries are, or were originally, stone hedges. They have degraded over the years until they now look like a hedge on top of a bank, but in many cases the stones are still there.

These walls are a fundamental characteristic of the settlements, possibly more than any other single feature. However, it is noticeable that in some parts of Trefonen and Treflach there are open plan front gardens, so beloved of modern developers or planners. The houses in the Martins Fields area of Trefonen are an example. If these are compared with the older, although still recent, housing in School Lane it is striking how the latter have a much more 'village' feel to them. Their boundaries are an attractive, haphazard mixture of hedging, fences and low brick walls, blending well together to give the feeling of a distinct community. Open-plan gardens on the other hand, which were originally designed to help knit a group of houses into a whole, actually can have the opposite effect, with each house standing isolated from its neighbours. The most recent significant development in Trefonen is Chapel View. These houses, while owing little to the vernacular architecture of the village, sit well in their location. However, the open-plan front gardens work against the village identity and are reminders of the sort of development which can be found in many parts of England. Owners of some of these properties have expressed real enthusiasm for adding low, local stone boundary walls.

Facilities and infrastructure

The Index of Deprivation 2004 shows that Lower Layer Super Output Area Oswestry 005D is ranked 2,825 out of 32,482 nationally for Housing and Services. This indicator measures barriers to key local services, including the road distance to a post office, supermarket or convenience store, and G.P. surgery.

Library and refuse collection services

All three settlements are served by the Shropshire County Council mobile library services and there are several arrangements for refuse collection and re-cycling, depending in particular on the ease of vehicular access for the Council's vehicles. Several lanes are inaccessible to the recycling lorries, and are therefore not included in the kerbside recycling collection service.

Sewerage provision

Trefonen and Treflach have a mixed system of combined and separate foul/surface water sewers. Surface water from roofs and lanes is largely shed to soakaways and ditches. The majority of properties are on mains sewers but there are still some septic tanks. There are no mains sewers in Nantmawr.

Electricity – and telephone supply

Many of the supplies are from overhead wires, which means a considerable number of poles exist. In Trefonen, for example, there are 91 poles and 6 pole mounted electrical transformers. The electricity poles also carry British Telecommunications (BT) distribution connections in some places. BT is in the slow process of removing these connections onto their own poles, which will result in an increased number of poles. However, BT is also providing ducts between the poles for telephony connections, which will reduce the amount of visible wiring. A mobile phone mast operated by Orange is located off Pit Lane.

Broadband access

This amenity is limited to one mega-byte provision in Trefonen and 0.5 mega-byte in Treflach, but none at all in Nantmawr, a subject of considerable concern. With the support of Switch on Shropshire it is expected that the situation in Nantmawr will be remedied by the end of October 2006.

Public transport

Treflach and Trefonen are provided with a regular, daily bus service, but if buses are not available at the times people want to travel, there is increasingly less use made of them. However the only bus service in Nantmawr is the school bus to Trefonen and Oswestry in the early morning, returning mid-afternoon. This means that all residents must have access to alternative transport. Some more detailed study should be made of the availability of public transport and its use promoted.

Lighting and street furniture

There is considerable concern about lighting, focused on how inappropriate it is in a rural area and how intrusive it is when kept on all night.

The majority of Trefonen's public highways have street lighting. There is limited lighting in Treflach and Nantmawr. Most of the lighting, particularly in areas of recent development, is from stand alone lamps. Older areas are served by lamps sited on electricity poles. In Trefonen 14 of the 51 lights are affixed to electricity poles.

Two authorities supply the lighting. Shropshire County Council supply all the main road and Trefonen east of the main road with dusk to dawn low-pressure sodium light (amber light which spreads in all directions from the lantern). However on the Chapel Lane link road and in Chapel View they have installed high pressure sodium with a shallow dish lantern, providing less light pollution and brighter light under the lanterns.

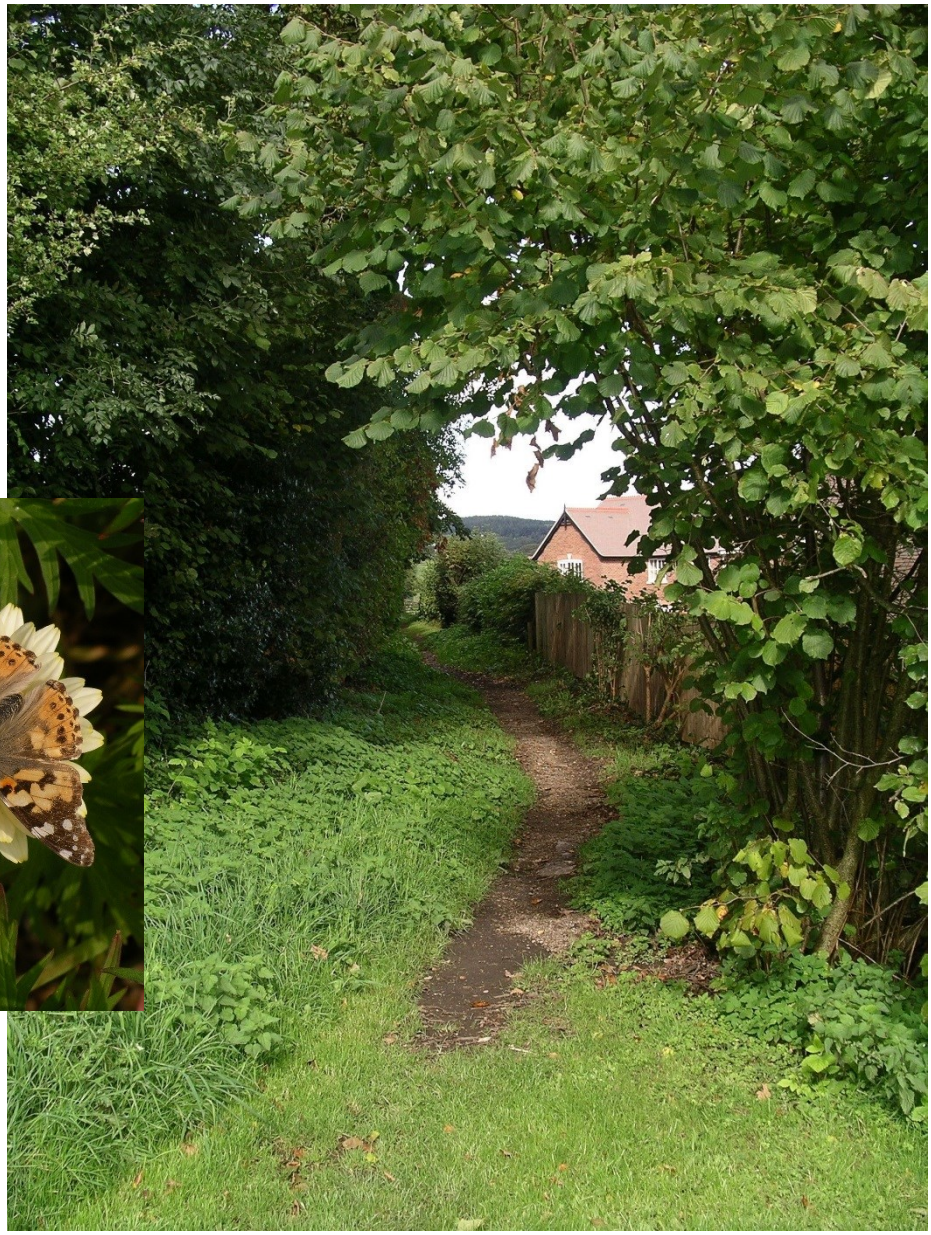
Oswestry Rural Parish Council is responsible for the rest of Trefonen and installed time clock controlled lights in most places. It was the first to pilot the high pressure sodium light within the village and its success has meant that all lantern head replacements under its control will follow a similar specification to reduce light pollution

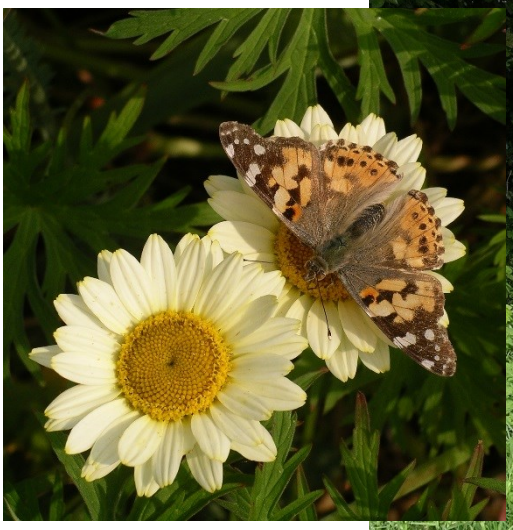
The rural nature of the settlements and people's appreciation of the night sky mean that there is strong objection to night lights. Additional lights are now visible from across the Shropshire plain and from the Oswestry area. This is intrusive and serves as a reminder that we all have an impact on the wider environment. Light pollution is becoming increasingly recognised as undesirable in a modern, caring society as recent legislation covering security lights attached to houses has shown.

Employment

The countryside and rural situation are reflected in economic activity and potential employment opportunities. Agriculture, mainly livestock, abounds and is a characteristic feature of the area. However, the rural situation also explains much of the activity which focuses on tourism, be it because of the very attractive, woody and hilly countryside, or more specifically the Offa's Dyke Path.

Those in active employment follow similar patterns of activity to those in other rural situations. If not engaged within the immediate village area, they tend to be working for services (education, health, public services) or local employers based in the nearby conglomerations. Oswestry, a significant market town with a livestock market and important industrial estate, is the place of work for many, and BT is a major employer. There is a very wide variety of jobs and professions undertaken by the people who live in the three settlements, whose expertise and specialisms continue to surprise.





Above: Offa's Dyke path going through Trefonen

Looking forward - a vision for the future

Change will continue. Population change and economic growth, new technology and new patterns of travel, leisure and consumer taste will have as much impact in rural as in urban areas. Our goal is to help people in rural areas to manage change, exploit the opportunities it brings, and enable them to create a more sustainable future.

Para 1.14 Our countryside: the future A fair deal for rural England

MAFF DETR November 2000 *© Crown Copyright 2000*

Vibrant, caring communities and self-sufficiency –

The people within each village are what matter for the future. The recommendations which are made reflect the vision of the vast majority within each settlement. However, the settlements do differ. Trefonen is a much larger community than the other two and has ease of access to practically all the services, as they are situated in the village. The developments at All Saints' church and in the Village Hall, the newly established youth group, the flourishing organisations, the ever more popular and varied annual village event: The Hill Walk Weekend, all speak of a community where people want to become involved and be active. There is much less evidence of this in Treflach and Nantmawr. Indeed there are real fears expressed by some in Nantmawr that the community is dying and that ways must be found to reverse the trend.

Want to get involved?

Jubilee Club
2nd & 4th Thursday each month

Women's Institute
1st Thursday each month & outings

Youth Club
Every Friday

Gardeners' Club
Last Thursday of each month

Indoor Bowling
Wednesdays – September to April

Trefonen Pre-School
Daily

Spinners and Weavers
2nd Tuesday of each month

Book clubs
One with waiting list. New one coming.

Annual Hill Walk Weekend
2006: 3 Peaks 16 mile walk, abseiling, motorbike trial, horse riding, football, buzzard and curlew walks, Mynydd Myfyr run, junior run, flower festival, scarecrow competition, pool knockout, concert, church service....

The impact of future change is not always easy to predict, but there are some factors of which communities can feel relatively sure. People speak increasingly of the need to consider how we get around. The number of cars per household is increasing, not only because the public transport facilities are in decline. While the country as a whole will be considering congestion, the cost of travel could well become a major concern. As people get older they do not necessarily find it easy to get around independently and the risk of isolation is increasing. Our community needs therefore to provide services locally, thus reducing the number of journeys necessary and making access to services easier for all. While some would suggest that being able to obtain deliveries from super markets, particularly with orders over the Internet, will solve many problems, it could also add to people's isolation and would most certainly prove extremely difficult, if not impossible, in many of the narrow lanes and roads locally. There needs to be some imaginative thinking about how we can exploit our strengths and assets, harness technology to meet our needs, and also care for each other.

Above: Hillwalk Flower Festival

Consideration should be given to using our public buildings for additional purposes, for example for clinics and health support, for additional learning opportunities, and as advice centres. The Village Hall will soon host the broadplace, a community broadband and IT facility, provided through Switch on Shropshire. Additional services

could be provided in a village shop, which could be an outlet for locally produced goods and crafts, and a collection point for mail order deliveries. Longer opening hours for the post office would ensure significantly greater use of it.

Communication between people is of fundamental importance. Village or parish newsletters play an important role and the creation of a local web-site would be an attractive idea for many, and promote the villages' attraction for tourists.

Recommendations

The Rural Parish Council should undertake a survey of the current public transport services and people's needs, including an exploration of a community transport scheme, and the possibility of extending existing volunteer driver schemes.

A web-site for the villages should be developed.

The Parish magazine should be supported and promoted.

The Broadplace (a community broadband and internet facility), established through working with Switch on Shropshire, should be fully developed and linked to the web-site.

All public access buildings: Trefonen Village Hall, Trefonen Primary School, All Saints' Church, the Barley Mow public house, Ashfield Stores, and the Royal Oak public house should be invited to join in dialogue about the incorporation within their premises of additional public services. Specific thought should be given to clinics and health services, to Citizens Advice, to internet access, to educational and social facilities and opportunities for people to meet informally.

The Youth Club and other facilities for young people should be promoted and supported.

Oswestry Borough Council should seek:
to ensure additional facilities for the promotion of wildlife at Treflach and Nantmawr quarries
to ensure the improvement and maintenance of the existing sport and leisure facilities in Trefonen
to ensure the playability of the football pitch
to elicit the views of older residents on leisure facilities in the local area.

The natural environment and heritage

The importance of the countryside to local people has been emphasized and it is already recognised as an area of special landscape character. Further interest in the richness of the natural environment could be promoted by the inclusion within the local website of pages devoted to records of bird, plant and animal life seen in the area. The starting point could be the lists local people have already made and submitted as part of the research for this Design Statement.

Hedges and verges, streams and areas of water, woodland and copses constitute extremely valuable habitat. Steps should be taken to inform people of their importance and there should be a deliberate effort to maintain them in good order. Local landowners and property owners have important responsibilities in this respect. No future development should threaten these natural habitats. There are many old trees in fields, meadows and gardens, and concerns that some may well be reaching the end of their life span. Existing trees need to be maintained, and there are plans to take advantage of a county scheme to ensure that new trees are planted.

The former quarries are a significant feature of the countryside and two in particular are the subject of local concern. The landfill proposals for Nantmawr Quarry are considered by most people to be detrimental both to the important natural habitat within the Quarry and also to the whole of the surrounding area. Considerable numbers of local people have been involved in fund raising and surveys to explore the issues. The development of Treflach Quarry as a wildlife site would be generally welcomed. It is thought that there is sufficient space to provide off-road parking at the entrance to the Quarry, which would be important on this busy road.

Offa's Dyke is unique historically and a recognised, important feature of the landscape. It can be seen stretching its way through the three settlements. The Offa's Dyke long distance Footpath crosses the three settlements but does not always follow the Dyke itself. It brings many country lovers to the area. Both should be preserved and maintained to the highest standard and the network of public footpaths and bridle ways treasured. Many paths are very well sign-posted and stiles are generally kept in good order. Local walkers usually report problems, such as overgrown or littered paths and broken stiles.

Recommendations

The preservation of the remaining, but significant, sections of Offa's Dyke is essential.

A review of all the trees in the settlements should lead to the identification of significant trees with appropriate maintenance and preservation arrangements. A tree planting scheme should be drawn up and implemented as part of the review, working with Shropshire County Council's Countryside Unit

Native species of trees and shrubs/hedges should be planted to retain the landscape and to benefit wildlife.

The yew trees at the former Efel Inn and in All Saints' Church yard should be retained for their natural and historical value.

Land and property owners should undertake regular maintenance (at recommended intervals) to keep hedges, verges, trees and waterways in good order.

Local people should contribute to a record of wild life activity and diversity and the record be used to ensure the natural habitats are preserved from development.

Landowners and householders should protect existing wildlife environments and help create new habitats in the form of copses, hedgerows, ponds, and walls. Advice is available from the local wildlife trust and others.

Shropshire County Council, working with local people and groups, should ensure that public footpaths and rights of way are well marked and maintained.

Local councils should take appropriate steps when views of the countryside become blighted by litter, unsightly rubbish or dumped items.

The landfill planning application for Nantmawr Quarry should be turned down.

Treflach Quarry should be developed as a wildlife site.

The built environment

The Infrastructure

While the Oswestry to the Tanat Valley road is a main thoroughfare it is still an unclassified road, and people are very keen that it should remain as such. Despite the imposition of 30 m.p.h. limits through Treflach and Trefonen, there is much concern that traffic travels far too quickly and that pedestrians are at risk. It will be important to ensure that the verges of the road are not further eroded, which means ensuring that HGV movement is restricted and that the number of vehicle movements is reduced by measures to tackle the use of the road as a shortcut. Nevertheless, at the moment most people think that the actual settlements are not dissected by the road, as happens in some villages. It is vitally important that this remains so.

The other roads and lanes in the area are showing clear signs of deterioration because of increased traffic and larger vehicles. It is clearly accepted that agricultural vehicles must be able to move around, but the additional delivery vehicles linked to modern life, for example, constitute a threat. As some of the country lanes have had their verges eroded, the carriageway has gradually been widened as ruts have been filled in. The road through Coed-y-Go to Morda is a good example of this. However, in most places hedgerows and stone walls limit the width of lanes. The frequent meeting of oncoming vehicles interrupts local journeys and grass verges and householders' private driveways have to be used as passing places. The lanes are now, it is argued, at capacity.

The local road network and narrow lanes are a feature of our landscape and should not be widened to permit two way traffic where this does not currently exist.

Street lights, on the other hand, are not accepted as a feature of the villages. In order to preserve and promote the rural identity of the villages, to enable people (including our visitors) to enjoy the night sky, and to conserve energy very many people wish to see the lights switched off by midnight. Indeed there are those who wish to see the street lights removed, but they consider themselves to be in a minority. It would be interesting to undertake a referendum on this matter!

With the new speed limits, the zebra crossing in Trefonen, and street lights, there are growing concerns about the proliferation of signage and street furniture. The signs are intrusive and arguably too numerous in places to convey information effectively.

The villages have very limited access to services and these need to be protected, and in time expanded. The Broadplace will provide additional facilities for all residents, and particularly children and young people.

Recommendations

All development proposals must be considered for their impact on the local communities of Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr, and on the infrastructure, particularly the roads and lanes, and the special landscape character of the area.

The settlements are discrete entities, with Trefonen, the largest, being particularly compact and well defined. The character of each village must be maintained by the protection from development of the fields and land surrounding the existing settlement.

The Oswestry to Nantmawr (unclassified) road should not be the subject of widening, in order to preserve its rural character. A few trees should be planted in the fields adjoining the road into the villages, with some in the hedgerow.

Local roads should not be the subject of widening orders.

Consideration should be given to weight restrictions on lanes too narrow to accommodate heavy vehicles..

The Highways Authority should review the appropriateness and effectiveness of road signs.

Consideration should be given to using a village shop or a central building as a point where local people may collect deliveries of packages, thus avoiding the need for delivery vans to use the lanes.

All street lights should be fitted with time switches and be switched off between midnight and 6.00 a.m. They should be equipped either with high pressure sodium down lights or white lights. In any replacement programme the lamp posts should be changed for more attractive street furniture, not made of concrete.

BritishTelecom should be encouraged to reduce the number of telephone poles and put cabling in ducts between poles.

No change of use or redevelopment of the two public houses, or of the shop and post office, should be permitted, as this would leave the community without reasonable access to such facilities and the communication networks they afford to the residents.

The shop and post office in Trefonen are particularly important as there is no such facility in Treflach or Nantmawr.

All settlements

The rural nature of the villages is of the utmost importance to local residents and any future development must address the need to retain that identity. It is fundamental to the ethos of the community and contributes hugely to the ways in which people engage with one another and care for one another. It explains the informal networking and ease of communication and encourages self-sufficiency, involvement and vibrancy. How the villages develop is of great importance to people.

While there are specific recommendations about future development for each village, there are many points which apply to the three settlements.

Recommendations

Landmarks and strategic views in and out of the settlement must be protected and promoted.

There should be no ribbon development on the approaches to any of the settlements.

Further development must respect the characteristics of the village, particularly with regard to the sense of space. Any replacement dwelling or extension must sit well within its plot, with the footprint similar to the relationship between existing nearby buildings and their sites.

Diversity is essential. In any future development there should not be houses of the same design next to one another and any semi-detached dwellings should incorporate different styles for each dwelling within the pair so that they are asymmetric but complementary.

New development must encourage variable building lines, while avoiding mutual overlooking.

The scale or proportion of buildings should complement and reflect surrounding dwellings and buildings.

The outside view of properties should not be spoilt by neglecting the backs of gardens and buildings.

Roof lines should be broken and varied. Roofs should be low pitched to reflect the vernacular style and keep views as open as possible.

Detail makes a difference and should be encouraged in brick work, particularly around windows and under eaves, and in the use of brick corbels.

Extensions should be subsidiary to the original building. On the road elevation, window shapes and styles must be continued. Materials used should match the original or be sympathetic to them and the area. Roof lines should be varied in height and orientation to add variety in form and shape; there should be no large, unrelieved expanses of roof.

Gates and driveways should respect the rural situation of the village and avoid the urbanisation of brick and high walls. Wooden and wrought iron gates are to be preferred and the use of pea gravel promoted, in particular to aid drainage.

Where a chapel has been taken out of use, its outward appearance should be retained as a historical feature

Provision should be made on each property for the collection and use of rainwater runoff from roofs

Lime based mortar, wooden window frames and environmentally friendly and sustainable materials should be used if at all possible.

Energy conservation measures should be incorporated within properties.

Above: Chapel Lane, Trefonen

Housing Density in Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr

Current development density values have been calculated using the development boundaries for Trefonen and Treflach from the 1996 – 2006 Oswestry Borough Local Plan.

	Area (m^2)	*Hectares*	*No. of properties*	*Density per hectare*
Trefonen				
Upper	231,101	23.11	102	4.4
Middle	31,480	3.15	61	19.36
Lower	180,625	18.06	121	6.7
Treflach	150,156	15.01	56	3.73

For the purpose of this study Trefonen lends itself to being divided into three areas:

Upper Trefonen comprises all land in the western sector or 'hillside' area of the village. Its eastern boundary is the Offa's Dyke Path and a continuation into Malthouse Lane and Bellan Lane

Middle Trefonen comprises the land east of this boundary line down to the Oswestry – Nantmawr road and includes Chapel View.

Lower Trefonen comprises all properties on the eastern side of the Oswestry – Nantmawr road.

Nantmawr has no development boundary and therefore no calculation is possible.

Trefonen Village

It is very clear, from the Oswestry Rural Parish survey and from local discussion that there is an overwhelming view that there should be no further development in Trefonen, with many believing the village has reached its natural capacity or even been over-developed. The present settlement (as defined by the current development boundary) has a well-defined physical boundary which fits well with the surrounding landscape.

It can genuinely be argued that Trefonen is a compact rural village settlement enjoying the basic facilities needed for such a settlement to thrive. It is sited in an area of significant natural beauty and is an active and lively community. However, it can also be argued that developments during the last fifteen years have pushed the village infrastructure to capacity, with many beginning to fear a threat to the rural character if such were to continue.

The three major sites either allocated for development in the 1999 adopted plan or for which there was then outstanding planning permission have now been fully developed. In addition there have been a number of "windfall" sites that have become available, recent examples being the former Efel Inn site and the site at "Hillside" in School Lane (which, together, have yielded a further 9 dwellings). Recent development has resulted in a

significant increase in population and its associated traffic. It is therefore considered that Trefonen cannot be expected to absorb any further development without damaging its character and seriously diminishing the quality of life of the existing inhabitants. It must be noted that the most recent development, on the car park of the former Efel Inn, has generated real hostility and anger, for it is viewed as being totally out of keeping with the vernacular architecture of the village and significant over-development of the site. This has intensified the feelings that 'enough is enough' and that 'no one listens'.

With the exception of the main through road, not one of the roads and lanes in the village is capable of accommodating anything but very light traffic. Whilst this is particularly true in the hillside area, School Lane and the roads leading off it are also of limited capacity. The need to use a special light vehicle for refuse collection in several parts of the village serves to demonstrate the narrowness of the lanes. [] Many of them are bounded by old stone walls and, particularly on the hillside, there is a noticeable absence of footways. The infrastructure will not support further development.

Public buildings and open spaces:

Following the closure of the Efel Inn, the village has only one public house – the Barley Mow. It is particularly important to emphasise that this is a valuable village facility. The Barley Mow has recently been improved and will shortly, it is understood, be able to provide better restaurant facilities. The new Offa's Dyke micro-brewery connected to the pub is now in production and its output is in great demand, locally and further afield. These developments, together with the success of the previous licensee in generating trade and contributing to the community, which seems likely to be further enhanced by the current licensee, suggest that no case for closure or conversion based upon non-viability could be justified.

Above: The 'green lung'

The Village Hall and All Saints' Church Upper Room provide excellent facilities and the playing field, the kick wall and children's play area are invaluable. There is strong feeling that the green area opposite the church and at the entrance to Chapel View should formally become the village green (known as Chapel Green) and that the field immediately to the north of it should remain as 'a green lung'. If it ever became available, part of it should be considered for development as tennis courts or a bowling green, for use by the community.

Recommendations for Trefonen

The character of Trefonen must be maintained by the protection from development of the open land and countryside of outstanding beauty which surrounds the present settlement. There are no sites outside the present (2006) development boundary suitable for development.

The area of land at the entrance to Chapel View should be know as Chapel Green and it should be promoted as a public open space with an appropriate tree planting scheme

Part of the field next to Chapel Green, bordered by Chapel Lane and the Oswestry Road, should, if it ever became available, be considered for the development of tennis courts, and as a public open space for community use.

With the rare exception of small scale, individual infill if a very specific local need can be proven, there should be no further residential development in Trefonen for several years to allow a period of consolidation and maturation. Any future development must be able to demonstrate that the infrastructure, particularly vehicular access, is sufficient and does not threaten others. The narrow lanes will not support development.

There should be no further residential development in the centre of the village.

The pub is a particularly attractive feature of the village centre. The car park area should be further enhanced by landscaping and softer detail: the planting of trees and bushes.

Properties with open plan restrictions should be enhanced by the erection of low, local stone walls where possible and where the owners so wish.

The old Victorian post box in the wall at the entrance to Bellan Lane should be preserved as a local landmark.

A tree, or trees, should be planted on the grass beside the war memorial.

There should be a tree planting scheme for Martins Fields and a review of the landscape features of all the small areas of open space at road junctions, to encourage the natural habitat and the rural identity of the village.. In particular the junctions of Woodland View, School Lane and Brooklea Close, and Old Post Office Lane and Silverdale Drive should be considered.

Treflach Village

The residents of Treflach have made it clear that they do not wish to see any major development such as has happened in Trefonen. They wish to preserve the current density of properties.

There is a perception that some areas of minor development might enhance the rural identity of the settlement as a village. Indeed, there are some outstanding planning permissions and a number of sites within and abutting the existing development settlement which have already been identified as potential locations for development of this kind. However, there is a firm belief that major growth in Treflach should not be considered, now or in the future. It is particularly important that the strategic gap between Trefonen and Treflach is protected and that there is no northwards ribbon development of the latter. Subject to the foregoing suggested very limited development, the village should be reclassified as being in 'open country' and treated accordingly from the planning point of view.

Although there is an ongoing problem with speeding traffic, there appears to be no need for road improvements other than the provision of safe parking at and a footpath to the proposed wildlife site at Treflach Quarry.

Recommendations for Treflach

Any limited development should be confined to small groups of two or three individual dwellings within or immediately abutting the existing development boundary. Over the last few years properties have only been built on infill sites. Further development, if any, should be on the same kind of site.

The size and character of new properties should be individual. In both new and restored or extended properties, stone walls and wooden windows are seen as desirable, whereas the use of white UPVC windows or doors should be discouraged

There are significant trees which provide effective screening of the village properties. This feature should be protected by the use of appropriate tree preservation orders.

In the development of the old Treflach Quarry site the road visibility should be improved at the entrance, where parking could be provided.

In the long term a solution to the access to Oak Lane needs to be resolved. This will enable the three sites currently with planning permission to proceed.

There should be no additional street lighting

.

Nantmawr Village

Nantmawr remains in open countryside and therefore has no development boundary.

Recommendation for Nantmawr

Limited development of individual sites, which reflect the scale and density of the existing settlement, should be allowed to enable the local community to thrive.

The special characteristic - Walls

Local people knew that stone walls were characteristic of the area, but their prevalence, importance and uniqueness in these three settlements have been one of the most exciting finds of this research. As boundary walls they not only enhance the visual appearance of the settlements, but they contribute significantly to the sense of a village environment. This is why the open plan aspects of recent developments in Trefonen are viewed with such distaste and dismay. They are urban in nature and appear out of character.

Agricultural, equine and commercial buildings:

Recommendations

Agricultural: these buildings should be sited and designed to reduce their apparent mass. Their impact should be reduced by screening, careful location within the local landform, or by locating close to existing farm buildings.

Stables and associated buildings should be sited in less prominent parts of paddocks and constructed of materials which complement the countryside.

Shops and business premises have a major visual impact. Owners should contribute to the appearance of the village by emphasising the rural setting, using non-reflective signs and quieter colours.

Large scale commercial or industrial development would be unsuitable. Were small scale development ever to be proposed: materials should match those characteristic of the area, and buildings should be screened and noise abated. Boundary walls of local stone should be required. There should be provision for parking and turning within the site.

Employment

In many villages there is a temptation to assume that most people commute to work. This is not proven here. Many people work locally and increasingly people will work from home. Agriculture and animal management, gardening and arboriculture, tourism and hospitality, craft work and care of young, old and infirm, all contribute to local employment opportunities.

Recommendations

We would look positively on applications for small-scale development which enhances the sustainability of the settlements, without prejudicing the environment and the well-being of neighbours and the community.

Rural tourism should be promoted and developed, where this can be done without adverse impact on the countryside and wildlife..

Local producers (such as farm shops and dairies) and crafts people should be supported.

Opportunities for part-time involvement in local services should be promoted, such as in the village Broadplace, in youth work, in village businesses.

The local web-site should be used to promote the tourist potential of the area.

Sites of wildlife interest should be further developed.

Broadband facilities should be developed to aid locally based businesses.

Representation

This Design Statement is based on the research of a Steering Group which was constituted in November 2005:

John Ashmore	**Sheila Carr**	**Sue Christian**	**Karen Pringle**
Wendy Clews	**John and Felicity Cripps**	**Pete and June Day**	
Julian Francis	**Brian Hogbin**	**Lynne Jackson**	
Allister Jones	**Bob and Kathleen Kimber**	**John and Diana Morten**	

ably supported by many local people who gave freely of their expertise, particularly

Allan & Ruth Dawes, David Lloyd, Patrick Mansfield and Christine Wade.

The first draft of the Statement was issued to and commented on in detail by a wide cross section of the local community. Draft 2 was available throughout the three days of the Trefonen Hill Walk Weekend in an exhibition of Design Statement activity. Members of the Steering Group answered questions and made notes of comments

The third draft was discussed and further amended in June 2006. The resulting document and specific recommendations for planning guidance were discussed with officers of Oswestry Borough Council in July 2006. Draft 4 was submitted in July 2006 to Oswestry Rural Parish Council and adopted as policy at its meeting on 25 August. It is now submitted formally to the Borough Council.

The Statement is now published to every household in Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr with a grant from Awards for All.

LOTTERY FUNDED

The material collected in preparation of the Statement is being archived and will be held initially for three years by Bob and Kathleen Kimber.