

Odd Rode Neighbourhood Development Plan – Evidence Base
ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANT VIEWS IN ODDRODE PARISH FINAL -
OCTOBER 2019



1. Introduction

1.1 A key feature contributing to the rural character and setting of Odd Rode is the frequent and varied views throughout the parish into the surrounding countryside. Odd Rode Parish Council has set out to identify 'Important Views' across the parish which are considered to be of local value and importance, and which should be afforded additional protection under the Odd Rode Neighbourhood Development Plan.

1.2 The Parish Council, together with the Odd Rode Parish Neighbourhood Plan Group, have prepared this assessment to create a consistent and transparent methodology for evaluating potential 'Important Views'. It forms part of the evidence base which has informed the production of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

1.3 It is recognised that the value of a view is difficult to measure. However, every effort has been made to apply a consistent approach to the evaluation of views in order to minimise subjectivity.

1.4 The Odd Rode Village Design Statement (2011) identified significant views within the parish, as did the Odd Rode Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (November 2017). These documents go some way to describing significant views from within the settlements. These views have helped to inform this assessment and some additional views have been identified through the Odd Rode Neighbourhood Plan Household Questionnaire, which have been considered where a clear description of the location has been given.

2. Policy Background

National Planning Policy

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) sets out land-use planning principles. Those that are relevant to the protection of views include

*122. Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account ... d) the desirability of maintaining an area's **prevailing character and setting** ...*

*127. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; c) are sympathetic to **local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting**, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities); d) establish or maintain **a strong sense of place**, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create **attractive, welcoming and distinctive places** to live, work and visit;*

*125. ... Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the **special qualities of each area** and explaining how this should be reflected in development.*

*170. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) **protecting and enhancing valued landscapes** ... b) **recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside**, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services*

185. Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account: a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to **local character and distinctiveness**; and d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the **character of a place**.

Local Planning Policy

2.3 Cheshire East Council's Local Plan Strategy 2010 - 2030 (July 2017), sets out the basic rules which any new development must follow, as well as allocating certain areas of land for new housing or employment. There are policies which are already in place to assist with protecting locally important buildings and landscapes which directly relate to the concept of protecting important views.

Of particular relevance is Policy SE 4 The Landscape

1. *The high quality of the built and natural environment is recognised as a significant characteristic of the borough. All development should **conserve the landscape character and quality** and should where possible, **enhance and effectively manage** the historic, natural and man-made **landscape features that contribute to local distinctiveness of both rural and urban landscapes**.*
2. *Development will be expected to:*
 - i. *Incorporate appropriate landscaping which reflects the character of the area through appropriate design and management;*
 - ii. *Where appropriate, provide suitable and appropriate mitigation for the restoration of damaged landscape areas;*
 - iii. **Preserve and promote local distinctiveness and diversity;**
 - iv. *Avoid the loss of habitats of significant landscape importance;*
 - v. **Protect and / or conserve the historical and ecological qualities of an area;**

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial_planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/cheshire_east_local_plan.aspx

Conservation Areas

2.4 There are two Conservation Areas within the Neighbourhood Development Plan boundaries:

- i) The Macclesfield Canal (designated in 1975) and
- ii) The Trent & Mersey Canal Middlewich – Kent Green (designated in 1992)

2.5 Cheshire East Council's Local Plan Strategy 2010 - 2030 (July 2017), contains Policy SE 7 The Historic Environment 1.

Cheshire East has an extensive and varied built heritage and historic environment, described in the justification text to this policy. The character, quality and diversity of the historic environment will be

conserved and enhanced. All new development should seek to avoid harm to heritage assets and make a positive contribution to the character of Cheshire East's historic and built environment, **including the setting of assets** and where appropriate, **the wider historic environment**. 2. Proposals for development shall be assessed and the historic built environment actively managed in order to contribute to the significance of heritage assets and local distinctiveness. Where a development proposal is likely to affect a designated heritage asset (including its setting) the significance of the heritage asset, **including any contribution made by its setting**, must be described and reported as part of the application.

2.6 The canal network is identified as a key asset in the supporting text (para 13.64). Paragraph 13.70 highlights that **With respect to setting, and wider context**, new developments should **respect the local character, massing, and scale of the area**.

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial_planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/cheshire_east_local_plan.aspx

2.7 Views into and out of Conservation Areas are important, particularly for linear conservation areas such as historic canals which cater for many users including visitors to the area. The Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area Appraisal (January 2009) outlines the importance of the open spaces:

5.0 Spatial analysis

*5.1 The character of spaces within the area The conservation area takes the form a long, relatively straight canal, on a largely north to south route, including elements of its setting, cutting a swathe through both rural landscapes, suburban and urban townscapes. The character of space along the canal is determined by the height, mass and bulk of canalside development or the height and density (according to season) of canalside trees and greenery - and their proximity to the edge of the canal – and open views beyond. **It is often as a result of built development or greenery outside the confines of the conservation area that has a considerable impact on the character and appearance within it.** The screening effect of greenery obviously changes with the seasons.*

5.2 Key views and vistas

*Although bridges along the length of the canal provide the best views, both along its length and outside to its setting, **many others also can be enjoyed from the towpath**. From the elevated position of the canal, along its many embankments and aqueducts one can see further and often enjoy long views of the surrounding countryside and particularly across to the Cheshire Plain, the Pennines and in some cases on a clear day the foothills of north east Wales in the distance. Such views help to place the canal in its wider context.*

2.8 Views to the Old Man of Mow and Mow Cop Castle are identified as key views (pg 18).

2.9 Much of the canal in Odd Rode is in Character Area 14:

Billy Tights Swing Bridge (No.78) to Hall Green Stop Lock (Map Sections 14A to 14E); This is the final section of the Macclesfield Canal before it meets the Trent & Mersey Canal (Macclesfield Branch) at Hall

Green Stop Lock. The canal is cut in a southwesterly direction passing through rural Cheshire, alongside

*farmsteads and Hamlets, such as Ackers Crossing before the outskirts of Scholar Green. Once again the railway is both visibly and audibly in the vicinity of the canal, running parallel only a few hundred yards at most and almost beside the canal at Scholar Green. As the canal was cut through **the rural landscape the many farmsteads and their historic buildings sit alongside the canal are visible and provide a positive setting to the canal's linear progress. At Ramsdell Hall a fine set of railings runs alongside the towpath, instead of the normal hedgerow.** However, these are in need of urgent assistance if their continued presence is not to be lost to the ravages of the weather as a result of their exposed location and lack of maintenance. At Scholar Green the proximity of the Village impacts negatively on a number of occasions ... The final length of the canal before Hall Green Stop Lock is once again within a cutting lined by trees and providing few glimpses to surrounding activities.*

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/macclesfieldcanalcaamp%20adopted%20january%202009.pdf>

3. Local Documents

Odd Rode Village Design Statement (2011)

3.1 Odd Rode Parish Plan was published in 2006. It was based on a questionnaire survey and one of the questions was: "Do you agree that the Parish Council should continue to guide the future developments in your village, by means of a Village Design Statement (VDS)?" To this 94% of the respondents answered "Yes". The Village Design Statement was finalised and adopted in 2011. As well as providing guidelines, the VDS identified a number of significant views in Odd Rode and contained a number of aspirations. For all settlements, there was an aspiration *to protect vistas that contribute to the rurality of the village, particularly on the boundary between the village and open countryside.*

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/Village%20Design%20Statement%20Final%208.pdf>

<http://www.oddrodeneighbourhoodplan.uk/category/reference/>

Odd Rode Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (November 2017)

3.2 This assessment identified important viewpoints in the parish of Odd Rode. It also provided details of the condition, value and sensitivities of the various landscape and settlement character areas:

Chapel Lane, Sandbach Road (Rode Heath)

The eastern side of the character area has significant mature trees which are protected by group and individual Tree Protection Orders. The mature registered park and garden of Rode Hall is at the site's eastern boundary. Further west most of the greenery is in front gardens in the form of small mature trees and shrubs. Notably, the large mature trees of the Wheelock valley and the Heath Avenue housing estate can be seen over the tops of roofs along the A533.

*Condition, Value and Sensitivities: chapel area is next to the **highly sensitive**, and listed, Rode Hall parkland.*

Sandbach Road (Thurlwood) - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- any development on the north west threshold of this **settlement should enhance the quality of this important gateway to the village**
- the **trees** around Tudor Cottage and those on the other side of Sandbach Road make a **valuable contribution to this gateway**
- any development on the commercial nursery fields seen when entering the area from Sandbach must be very carefully handled in this **sensitive threshold to the settlement**

Rode Heath and Thurlwood Canal - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- the canal is a highly valuable historical, and recreational, community asset
- **there are important, character-setting views from the towpath across the Wheelock valley that should be protected**
- the **trees and woodland** of the Wheelock valley are **vital components of this character area**

A34 Scholar Green - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- several recent, small-scale housing developments off the A34 are encroaching on the **sensitive Cheshire Plain character area**.
- **the field boundary trees**, particularly those either side of east-west lane, are **vital components of this character area**

Scholar Green Canal South - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- this part of the canal corridor, with its bridges, banks and trees, is **highly sensitive to visually intrusive development**
- the trees that line the canal are vital components of this character area

Scholar Green Canal North - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- Cinderhill Lane, north of Drenfell Road, has a **valuable built character consistent with the heritage of the canal**
- The line of **trees** on the east bank of the canal are an **asset in the landscape**
- There is potential for an improved civic focus, involving street and **canal scene and open space improvements**, around Cinderhill Lane

Heritage Marina, Ramsdell Hall - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- the changes occurring in the triangle of land to the south of Ramsdell Hall, including the marina, are part of the character of this area
- Ramsdell Hall and its parkland is a **highly sensitive area**
- The ad hoc moorings north of Ramsdell Hall are detrimental to the quality of this character area
- The trees north of Ramsdell Hall, that are within the parkland setting, do not benefit from the same protected status as those in the rest of the park

The Bank - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- The slopes surrounding The Bank are **highly visible**

- *The trees and woodlands around The Bank do not benefit from the same protection given to the trees to the north of The Bank in the Drummer Lane area.*

Mount Pleasant Centre - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- *The topography, building materials, idiosyncratic road network, and the presence of a village green, make this a **unique environment***
- *The **views both into and out of this area are important***
- *There are many valuable trees throughout the area; none benefit from protection*

Mount Pleasant Lanes and estates - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- *The topography, building materials, and the idiosyncratic road network, make this a **unique environment***
- *The **views both into and out of this area are important***
- *There are many valuable trees throughout the area; none benefit from protection*
- *The recently built estates are out of character with the incremental character of the rest of the settlement*

Woodcock Lane, Chapel Bank, High Street - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- *The combination of historic layout, gritstone buildings, topography, cultural artifacts and views, make this a **highly sensitive area***
- *The trees in the graveyard, on the ridge behind Woodcock Lane and around Coronation Mill are important features in the landscape but have no statutory protection.*

Primitive Street and Station Road - Condition, Value and Sensitivities:

- *The **fragmentary nature** of the built environment is an **important element in this area's character***
- *The trees between Primitive Street and Halls Road are important features in the residential landscape, but have no statutory protection*

<http://www.oddrodeneighbourhoodplan.uk/category/reference/>

4. Methodology for assessing Locally Important Views and Viewpoints

Selecting and describing viewpoints and views

4.1 The viewpoints have been selected by considering the views identified in the Village Design Statement, The Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, the Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area Appraisal and those that were suggested by residents in the resident questionnaire. Three volunteers took photographs of views and carried out the initial stages of the assessments to bring back to the group for further consideration.

4.2 Each identified viewpoint has been evaluated. Information about each viewpoint is provided in appendix 1. The first column provides a reference number which corresponds with viewpoint markers shown on the Map of Locally Important Views (see page 10). The written descriptions of viewpoints/views are intended to take precedence over map markers, which are for indicative purposes only. For example some of the viewpoints are on movement corridors (e.g. roads) which means the view is likely to be seen over some distance or from several points along the way and can generally be described as a panoramic view; whilst others are framed vistas that are only glimpsed through gaps in buildings or along a street.

4.3 The second column describes the location of viewpoints. All of the viewpoints are publicly accessible (e.g. canals, roads, footpaths, bridleways or public open spaces), as these have more frequent usage than viewpoints on private land.

4.4 The third column states any designation applying to land where the viewpoint is located (e.g. Conservation Area). It also records the landscape types of the viewpoint.

4.5 The fourth column states the type of viewpoint, including:

- Historic /cultural
- Movement corridor (e.g. road, footpath, cycle trail)
- Recreational

4.6 The fifth column states the level and type of users at the viewpoint e.g. many, moderate or few and vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist.

4.7 Column six states the direction of the view from the viewpoint.

4.8 From the seventh column onward the detail relates to the view itself. Column seven provides a description of each view, recording characteristics such as:

- whether the view is limited/ contained, panoramic, elevated, glimpsed, open or expansive;
- whether there are dominant elements in the foreground, middle distance or on the skyline;
- whether it is framed by built development, vegetation or landform;
- whether it is essentially rural or urban;
- whether it is likely to be significantly altered by seasonal change (i.e. views opening up as a result of trees losing leaves in winter);

4.9 Column eight details the key components of each view, including:

- features that positively contribute to the importance, distinctiveness and attractiveness of a view (e.g. Dover's Hill along the skyline);
- iconic features (e.g. church tower);
- the degree of containment;
- the rural setting;
- detractors in view (e.g. busy transport corridors, overhead powerlines, largescale / extensive development).

Grading the importance of viewpoints and views

4.10 The remaining columns in the table capture the grading of the viewpoint and view and then these are considered together to reach a final overall grading to identify which are the important views.

4.11 At a meeting of the steering group on 8th October 2019 the viewpoints and views were presented to the group and graded in terms of their importance. The viewpoints were considered to determine whether they were 'exceptional', 'special' or 'representative'.

4.12 Exceptional viewpoints include sites within nationally designated landscapes such as AONBs; historic sites of particular importance (Grade I/II* listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments); sites with strong

associations to nationally famous cultural works; and sites where viewers have unique and prolonged/unfolding views from main transport corridors, national trails, recreational routes or national cycle network routes.

4.13 Special viewpoints include historic sites of national importance (Conservation Areas, Grade II listed buildings); sites with strong associations to locally famous cultural works; and sites where viewers have opportunities to appreciate views – for example, approach roads leading to villages, regional long distance footpaths, well used bridleways and footpaths within markedly tranquil settings.

4.14 Representative viewpoints include typical local landscapes; unregistered heritage assets (e.g. locally listed buildings); sites which are degraded by the presence of urban or highway structures; and sites where viewers are on movement corridors which are typical of the locality or which provide only fleeting views.

4.15 In grading viewpoints, account has been taken of how many people experience a viewpoint, as well as of the quality of that experience. Experiencing a view whilst travelling at speed would normally have a bearing on the quality of experience. For example a view of a well-known landmark from a quickly moving vehicle might be qualitatively inferior to that same view experienced by a pedestrian. However, views along well used roads are experienced by a large number of people daily, therefore their importance is increased.

4.16 In grading the views themselves they were once again graded as either ‘exceptional’, ‘special’ or ‘representative.’

4.17 Exceptional views might include highly valued, panoramic views or long distance views across intact countryside; they might capture the quintessential character of an area; they might allow for an appreciation and understanding of the wider surroundings of the Cotswolds AONB; they might contribute to the enjoyment of important heritage or cultural locations; or they might be unique in their own way.

4.18 Special views might include panoramic or long distance views, dramatic scenery and skyline features; they might allow an appreciation of the more intimate setting of local villages within local landscapes; they might help to reveal landscape character types; or they might be comparable to other special views.

4.19 Representative views might include narrow or glimpsed views; they might be marred by the presence of negative features which detract from the quality of the experience; or they might be typical views which are replicated elsewhere.

Grading overall importance to arrive at ‘Important Views’

4.20 In order to identify the important views the combined importance of the viewpoint and views has been considered using the following approach.

4.21 Where both the viewpoint and the view have the same rating then the overall rating is given at that same level. For example where both are ‘representative’ this has resulted in an overall rating of ‘representative’. Where the viewpoint is representative but the view is exceptional this has resulted in an overall rating of ‘special’. Where a ‘representative viewpoint’ is combined with a ‘special view’ or a ‘special viewpoint’ is combined with an ‘exceptional view’, the group had to look at which factors were predominant to determine which level to grade it at.

4.22 Any view identified as having an overall importance that is 'special' or 'exceptional' has been carried forward into the draft plan within the Locally Important Views policy.

5. Important Views identified

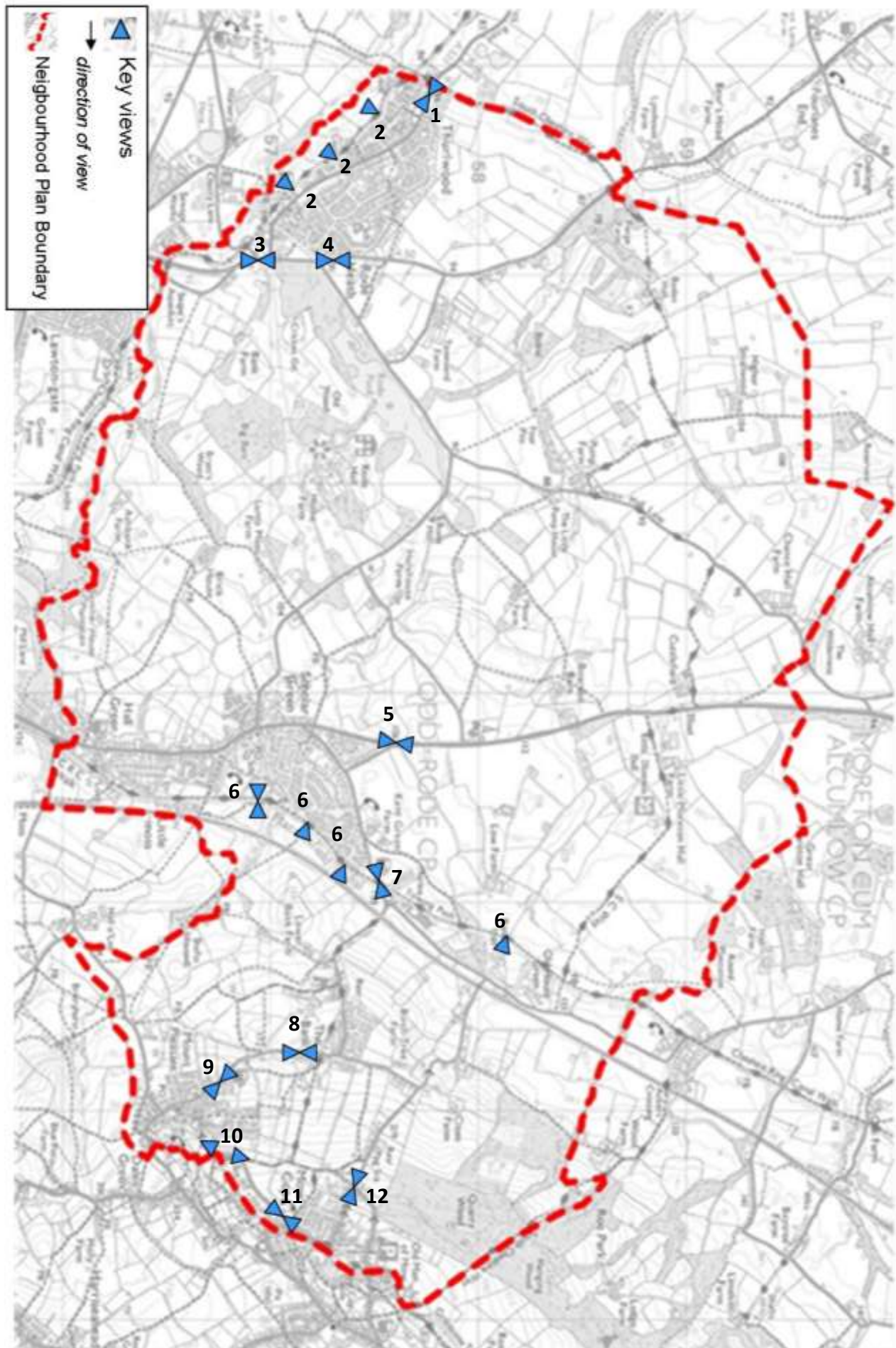
5.1 The table in appendix 1 provides information about each of the Important Views identified in the Odd Rode Parish Neighbourhood Plan. These have each been assessed according to the methodology set out above and only those with an overall grading of special or exceptional have been carried forward into the Plan.

5.2 The Important Views identified by this assessment should not be considered a comprehensive list of every important view within Odd Rode parish. However, each Locally Important View identified should be considered to have local value and importance.

5.3 The views fall into three broad groups:

- a) Views at some of the main gateways to the settlements (where there is a gradual transition from the countryside to the built environment ... development on one side of the highway only or very different densities of development on each side). These gradual transitions are distinctive to the local settlements and help maintain the rural character of Odd Rode. Development that would create a more abrupt settlement boundary, in stark contrast to the open countryside, would detract from the rural character of Odd Rode.
- b) Views into and out of the two Conservation Areas (the canals) where development is usually on one side of the canal (creating a rural and semi rural character to the canal). These gradual transitions are distinctive to the local canals and help maintain the rural character of the canals. Development that would create an urbanised feel to the canals would detract from the rural character of Odd Rode.
- c) The unique (in the parish) and rare (in Cheshire) special character of the St Luke's Church & Woodcock Wells School area. The views into this street scene are of a small group of traditional stone buildings in wooded uplands, reminiscent of the Peak district (Mow Cop is a moorland ridge at the western edge of the Staffordshire Moorlands, forming the upland fringe of the southern Pennines).

5.4 The photographs are representative of the relevant view and are not to be seen as definitive.



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