

Llanwrtyd Wells

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT



Consultation on the Designation of Llanwrtyd Wells as a Conservation Area

Date issued: 19th September 2011

Response date: 30th October 2011

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1 Introduction

Llanwrtyd Wells Town Council asked the Powys County Council Built Heritage Team to consider whether a conservation area could be designated at Llanwrtyd Wells. An extensive programme of consultation and analysis has been undertaken in order to produce this draft appraisal document.

This Consultation Document summarizes the appraisal and explains the impact of conservation area designation. It will be circulated to every property in the local area. This document contains a response form with a number of direct questions and provides an opportunity for public response.

The full appraisal document can be downloaded from our website: www.powys.gov.uk/heritage. A hard copy has been sent to the Town Council and copies are also available for public consultation in the following locations:

- Llanwrtyd Wells Public Library
- Powys County Council Planning Department, The Gwalia, Llandrindod Wells
- Builth Wells Public Library

The Built Heritage Conservation Officer will be available in Llanwrtyd Public Library on Thursday 13th October 2011 (10.00am – 1.00pm and 2.00pm – 7.00pm) to answer any queries or you can contact her via e-mail, phone or letter (see contact details).

The recommendation in this document is that a conservation area is designated at Llanwrtyd Wells. The proposed boundary is shown in below and we would encourage a wide response to the proposals.

2 What is a Conservation Area?

A conservation area is an area *of “special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”*¹. It is the combination of the buildings, street patterns, open spaces, vistas, landmarks and other features analysed in conjunction with its historic development which gives a conservation area its distinctive character.

The first conservation areas were created in 1967, and there are now over 519 conservation areas in Wales.

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Local councils decide which areas are to become conservation areas and have special powers of control to help them keep the places special. This means they can control development and demolition within conservation areas as well as setting up projects to make them better places. The Council employs a person, called a Conservation Officer, who has special responsibility for looking after these areas. There are also special controls over trees in conservation areas.

Under the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Powys County Council as the Local Planning Authority must review, from time to time, its conservation area designations and consider any new areas. It must also formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas. These reviews take the form of appraisals with management plans and they often include short histories of each conservation area to aid understanding of its development and help safeguard them into the future.

3 What does living in a conservation area mean?

Development in or near conservation areas must be sensitive to its character and appearance. When a planning application affects a conservation area or its setting then one of the things a planning officer has to consider is whether the proposal would affect the special interest of the conservation area. If it does, then the application may be refused.

Within a conservation area the council also has extra controls over:

- Demolition of certain buildings and walls
- Minor extensions and alterations to properties including detached buildings like garages
- The position of satellite dishes
- The protection of trees

Demolition

Applications for consent to totally or substantially demolish any building within a conservation area must be made to the local planning authority. Generally there is a presumption in favour of retaining buildings and walls which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Minor developments

If you live in a conservation area you have to obtain permission before making changes which would normally be permitted elsewhere. This is to ensure that any alterations do not detract from the area's appearance. These changes include certain types of cladding, inserting dormer windows and putting up satellite dishes which are visible from the street.

The Council, where it is felt necessary, can also place further planning

controls on properties in conservation areas by making what is known as an Article 4 (2) Direction. **AT THIS STAGE THIS IS NOT PROPOSED FOR LLANWRTYD WELLS** (please see below).

Trees

Trees make an important contribution to the character of the local environment. Anyone proposing to cut down, top or lop a tree in a conservation area, whether or not it is covered by a tree preservation order, has to give notice to the local authority. The authority can then consider the contribution the tree makes to the character of the area and, if necessary, make a tree preservation order to protect it.

Article 4 (2) Direction

Even in conservation areas certain types of minor development and alterations don't normally require planning permission. These works are often referred to as being 'permitted development'. Individually, many of these changes may appear fairly minor but added together they can have a significant effect on the character and appearance of a conservation area.

Once a conservation area is designated the Local Planning Authority can consider whether it is necessary or advisable to make, what is known as, an Article 4(2) Direction, which will restrict a number of these permitted development rights.

Article 4 (2) Directions mean that planning permission is required for alterations to windows, doors, roofs and chimneys - including changes in materials, like using UPVC windows. Permission is also required for erecting porches, gates, walls and fences, the laying down of hardstanding and the demolition of walls around dwellings. The exact restrictions for each Direction are a direct response to the special characteristics of each conservation area. Some conservation areas do not have an Article 4(2) Direction. Where a Direction would mean that a planning application would be required where it would not have been required before the Direction was made, there is no charge for the application.

Article 4(2) Directions are an important tool for managing change in sensitive areas. It is considered that the special character of Llanwrtyd Wells would benefit in the long term from such a Direction. This would allow us to help protect the important architectural details in the town and encourage the appropriate replacement of unsympathetic elements. However, it is felt that the change to conservation area status is a big adjustment for the town and **it is recommended that until funding is available to allow the Council to help financially assist with appropriate repairs and alterations, an Article 4(2) Direction is not made**, unless public opinion is strongly in favour of one.

Grants and Financial Assistance

Conservation Area designation means that some avenues for grants or financial assistance will be opened up to residents and property owners.

Designation also allows the Local Authority to seek funding for larger repair and regeneration schemes. There is no guarantee that financial assistance would be secured for Llanwrtyd Wells if it were designated but without designation no attempt for these schemes can be made.

4 Summary of Special Interest

The comprehensive remains of a distinct period of social and economic development, which reflects the spa history of mid Wales and resulted in a unique example of a Mid Wales spa town in an outstanding landscape location.

Exceptional Group Value.

The spa towns in Powys were one of the great building projects and products of the Victorian / Edwardian period in Wales. The spa towns in Mid Wales are dramatic survivals of this period and crucial evidence of a key period of historical, social and economic development with substantial physical remains. An attractive and functional place for both residents and tourists, Llanwrtyd also remains an invaluable educational and cultural resource both through its history and physical remains.

At its centre, Llanwrtyd Wells contains a dense concentration of buildings with a scattering of important open spaces and 'key linking' features. Towards its outskirts the density of development lessens until there is a definite boundary with the outlying fields and agricultural lands. Natural features such as the landscape context and the river have had and still have a key influence on the character of the town.

Much of the character of the town stems from its road layout and plan form, probably dating back to the medieval period. Layered over this are perhaps three characteristic layers of built heritage: the buildings of the later spa years; those from the early spa years; and the sparser eighteenth century built heritage. There are also the distinctive 'satellite' buildings forming a star or 'fan' like formation around the town and linking in physically, economically and historically. The twentieth century has also left its own architectural legacy around the peripheries of the town. This leaves us with a town that has a distinct group value, having responded to all the major expansions and developments in its history with a representative built environment, which survives in pretty much its original form today.

While the town has a definite architectural character, to define what makes it different from other Victorian / Edwardian towns is sometimes difficult to see from architectural and historic evidence alone. The work carried out with the local community has given us strong indications of those aspects of its character which cannot be picked up from historic research, characterization or building analysis. The strength of the local community has its origins in its history but continues to ensure the town is loved and that its future is

considered. The agricultural influence is still strong today in its culture and its relationship with the outlying farming communities, while the influence of the Welsh language and culture is still robustly championed.

Many of the buildings types and styles can be found elsewhere in Wales and further afield, but it is the comprehensive survival at Llanwrtyd Wells which gives it its special interest. A virtually complete range of the types of buildings and facilities which developed and grew up at Llanwrtyd to become the 'spa product' survive. Boarding houses, inns, shops, hotels, pumping houses, wells, recreational spaces, residential houses, chapels, recreational and community halls, as well as the street plan and the outlying satellite buildings around the 'wells', the station and the school all survive in recognisable condition. This 'group value' and condition of survival, without the oft found compromise caused by later development, sets Llanwrtyd apart from other spa towns in Mid Wales or Victorian towns further afield.

The close historical connection with Llandrindod Wells, Builth Wells and Llangammarch Wells and the understanding this gives us about the development of mid Wales in this period also provides another level of significance. The evidential value of the social and economic growth in this period is an important and irreplaceable tangible resource, of use not just to academics but to all residents and visitors. Their wider associational significance in relation to the study of spas and the development / spread of the health and leisure industry over the UK and even within Europe is not yet fully understood.

At a more local level the aesthetic value of Llanwrtyd and its location can not be overstated. Aesthetically the town and its location provide both social and economic value, both currently and historically, as an important place to live, work and visit. The cultural and community ties with this place are inextricable, strong and long founded.

There is little doubt that having undertaken this appraisal process that Llanwrtyd Wells has the required 'special interest' for a conservation area to be designated. However, without public support, it is unlikely that a conservation area would be successful or reach its full potential. Over a period of time the Built Heritage Team has endeavoured to engage with local people to explore the character, history and architectural interest of the town. The Team hopes that the support expressed throughout this process will be given to the designation.

5 Boundary Recommendation

5.1 Previous Consultation

Information generated at workshops and discussion groups was used in a desk based assessment and then tested on site to formulate a map showing buildings which were considered to contribute either positively, neutrally or negatively to the character or appearance of the Town. Due to the influence of the 'spa years' on the development of the town and taking into account opinions voiced at the workshops the area of the built environment to be assessed was extended to include more outlying properties such as Victoria Wells and the former Dol-y-Coed and Abernant Lake Hotels. The town centre part of this map has been included above in section 4. Based on this information, three suggestions for a potential conservation area boundary were developed and sent out for consultation.

Boundary suggestion 1 was tightly concentrated on the historic core of the town and excluded the modern 20th century development around the edges. This received **ten** votes with minor suggestions for change.

Boundary suggestion 2 included all of the nucleus of the town, including the modern 20th century development and estates. This received **no** votes.

Boundary 3 included all of the nucleus of the town and extended out to include the outlying ex-hotels and mansions which were clearly associated with the spa town development. This received **six** votes with minor suggestions for change.

5.2 Recommendation

It is recommended that if a conservation area is to be designated at Llanwrtyd Wells then the boundary should be drawn as for Boundary suggestion 1 with the inclusion of the playing field area, the listed railway bridge over the Irfon, the Victorian school and nearby buildings of interest. Other particular properties and small areas were suggested for exclusion but in order for the boundary to remain coherent these changes have not been adopted.

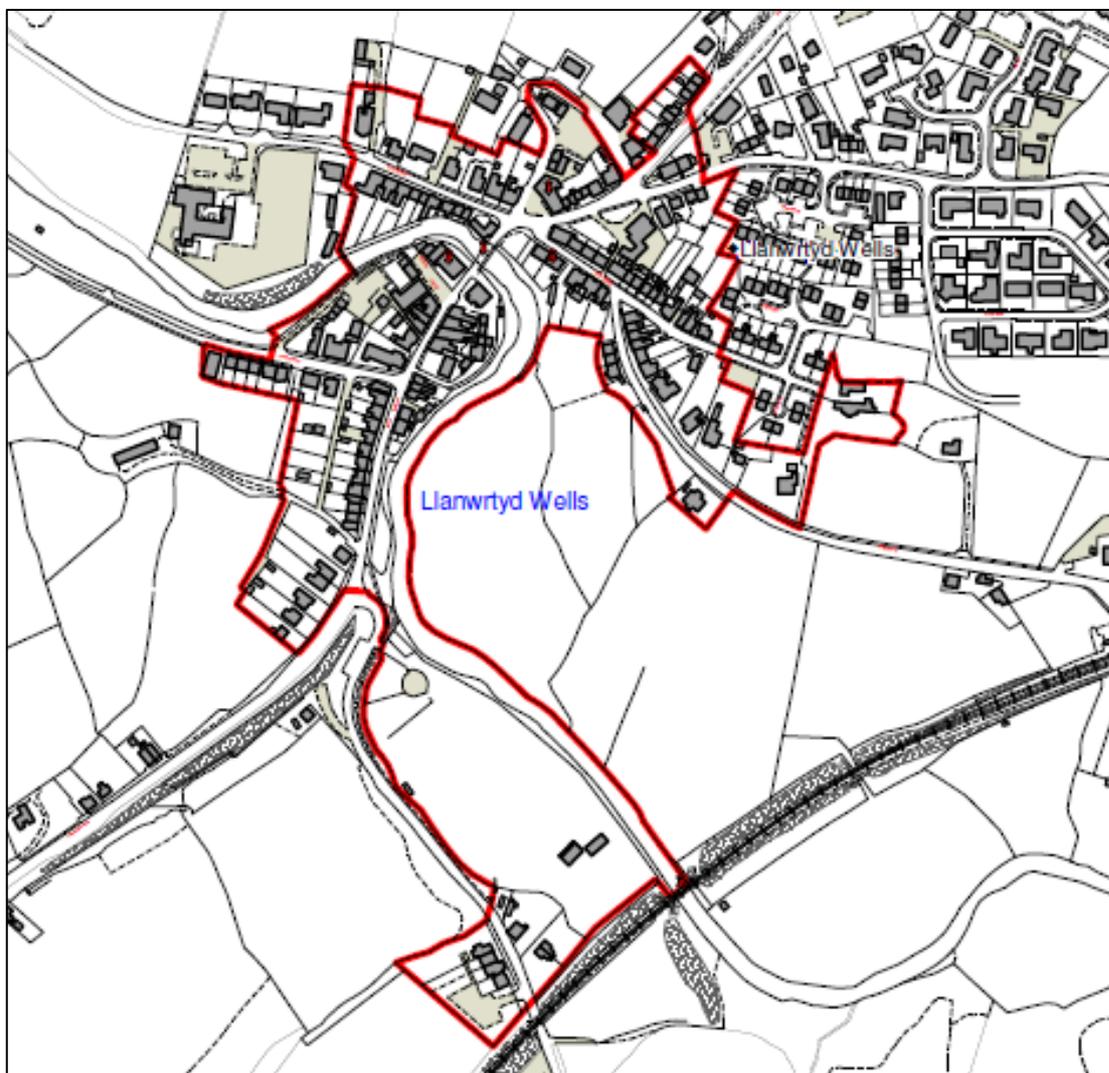
This option would fit well with national guidance for the following reasons:

- The majority of those properties which lie outside the boundary and are historically connected with the spa town and its development are either already protected through being statutory Listing or through future inclusion on the List of Buildings of Local Architectural and Historic Interest.
- Guidance urges authorities not to draw boundaries too tightly but also to consider whether protection of the wider setting is desirable or whether it could be best protected through other means, i.e. adding an

appropriate planning policy and/or applying normal development controls in a way that respects the character and appearance of the conservation area.

- Conservation area designation is not generally considered an appropriate means of protecting the wider landscape. Managing the historic character of a wider landscape requires an alternative approach, for example, through historic landscape characterisation or landscape character assessment, or within existing National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Deciding which areas are of 'special architectural or historic interest' is ultimately a matter for the judgement of local planning authorities. But local communities have a vital role to play and this recommendation takes into account the democratic vote and suggestions of the local community.

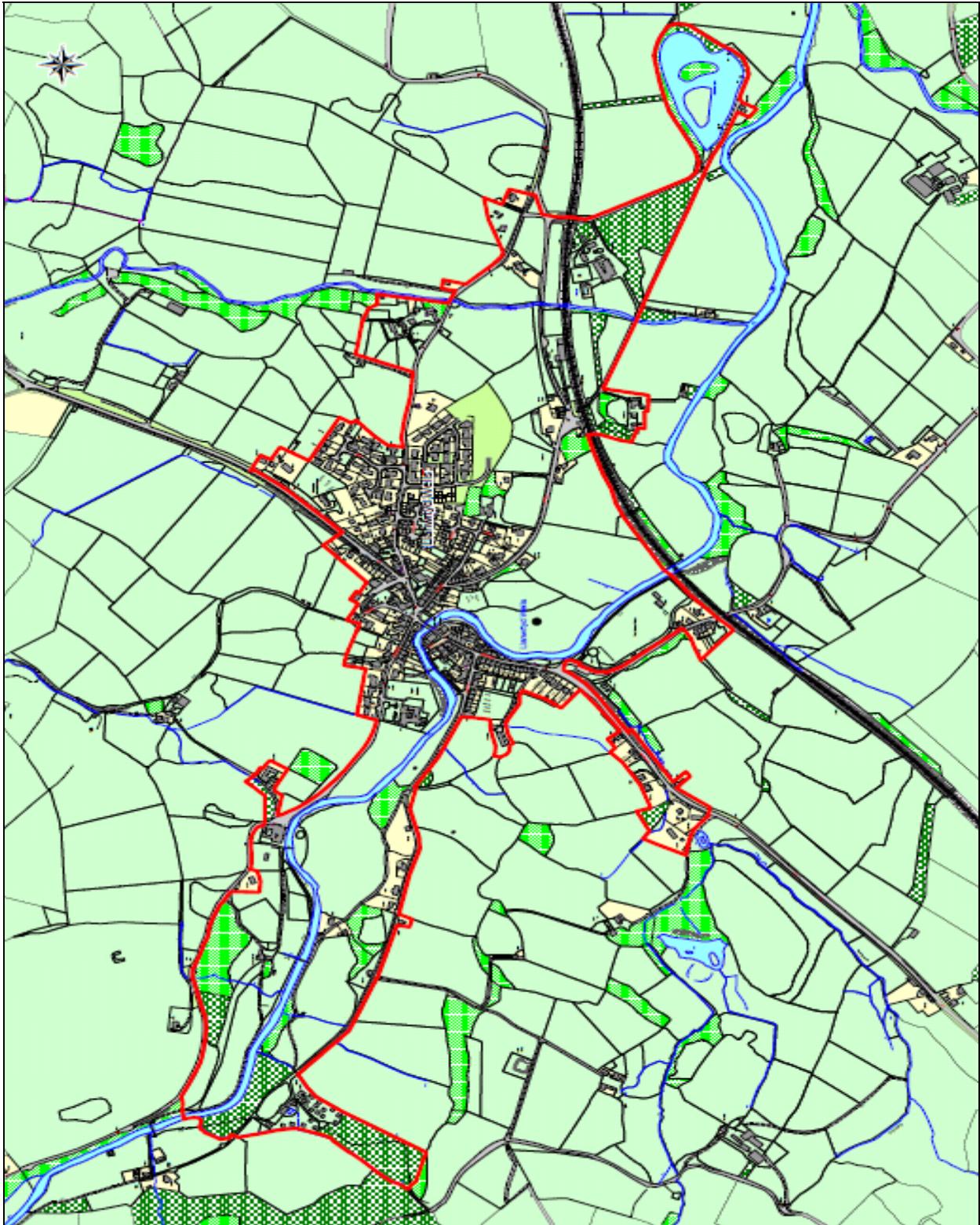
This proposed boundary is shown in red below.



Given the positive interest in Boundary suggestion 3 we have also included a map of this suggestion overleaf, to ensure the correct boundary is chosen. We

would ask all consultees to carefully consider the recommendation above, to confirm which boundary they consider the most appropriate, and to show their preference by answering the relevant questions on the response form.

Boundary suggestion 3.



- In order to avoid unsightly gap sites, Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of properties within the conservation area will not be granted until a suitable scheme for their replacement has been approved.
- Design & Access Statements relating to development within the conservation area should pay due regard to its special interest.

New Uses & Converting Old Buildings

- Where possible new uses for buildings or spaces should not impact on the particular characteristics or important historic or architectural features of the building or wider conservation area.
- Retail uses for existing properties with historic shopfronts will be encouraged and supported where possible and appropriate.
- Compatible and sensitive new uses for empty buildings will be encouraged and supported.
- Innovative techniques for the conversion of buildings will be encouraged where this will ensure the buildings' future and its continuing contribution to the character / appearance of the conservation area.
- Support will be given to the conversion of existing buildings to provide modern day facilities over and above new development, where there is a proven need and where this will ensure the buildings' future and its continuing contribution to the character / appearance of the conservation area.

Architectural Detailing

- Every attempt should be made to retain and enhance the existing architectural detailing of the properties within the town.
- The Built Heritage Team will provide advice and guidance relating to the conservation and enhancement of architectural detailing.
- The Local Planning Authority will make every attempt to secure funding to support the conservation and enhancement of the architectural detailing in the town.
- The Local Planning Authority will make an Article 4(2) Direction to help protect and manage change to the architectural detailing once appropriate funding has been secured.
- The painting of already rendered properties in appropriate colours will be supported.

Views

- Where views of the surrounding landscape exist they should be maintained and additional views encouraged where they would not detract in other ways from the character of the town.
- Views into the town along the main roads should be managed so as not to harm their character.
- Views along the river should be maintained and where possible enhanced.

Surfacing, Public Realm and Boundary Treatments

- A review of Highway matters which affect the character and appearance of the town will be encouraged. This will include signage, road markings, and car parking.
- Improvements to surfacing and the public realm will be encouraged and supported.
- Opportunities for retaining and recovering green and open space will be supported, where appropriate.
- The retention and enhancement of the small intimate key linking spaces will be encouraged and supported.
- The retention of traditional boundary treatments will be encouraged and new boundary treatments should be appropriate to their context.
- The key open space at the river crossing / in front of the Neuadd Arms / site of the old Post Office will be retained and where possible enhanced.

Research & Future Characterisation Work

- Archaeological works in the town will have due regard to the research questions identified in this appraisal relating to the medieval period and the town's early economic and administrative role.
- When the Local Planning Authority draws up a List of Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest, the buildings mentioned in this appraisal will be assessed for inclusion.
- The Built Heritage Team will both seek and support opportunities relating to the interpretative provision regarding the history and development of Llanwrtyd Wells and the involvement of local people.
- The Built Heritage Team will continue to provide and encourage the provision of bilingual resources, where possible.

7 Contacts

The PCC Built Heritage website contains information and guidance relating to Conservation Areas as well as contact details and links to partners and other useful information. It is also being used to assist with the consultation on this draft document.

www.powys.gov.uk/heritage

Built Heritage & Conservation Officer (South Powys)

Cy Griffiths
Planning Services
The Gwalia
Ithon Road
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 6AA
Tel: 01597 827393
E-Mail: cyllene.griffiths@powys.gov.uk

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

THIS RESPONSE FORM IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT ON OUR WEBSITE (www.powys.gov.uk/heritage)

**PLEASE SEND HARD COPIES OF RESPONSES TO:
CY GRIFFITHS at the address above, by the 30th October 2011.**

Question 1. Do you agree with the assessment set out in the consultation document? If not, please state why and what changes you would suggest.

Question 2. Are there other reasons for valuing Llanwrtyd Wells that should also be considered here?

Question 3. Do you think Llanwrtyd Wells should be designated as a conservation area? If not, please state why and what alternative approach could be considered for managing the historic and architectural interest of Llanwrtyd Wells.

Question 4. Do you agree with recommendation for the boundary of the conservation area? If not, please state why and what changes you would propose.

Question 5. Taking into account the information provided here and in the appraisal document, do you think Llanwrtyd Wells should have an Article 4 Direction...

a)...now (at or soon after designation)?

b)...in the future (when finance for grant schemes etc is available)?

Question 6. Do you think the management proposals would help to preserve and enhance the 'special interest' of Llanwrtyd Wells, if the area were designated? If not, please provide suggestions for amendments.

Question 7. If you support designation, taking into account minor changes may be made as a result of this consultation, would you recommend adoption of this document by the Council?

Question 8. Would guidance on best practice within the conservation area be useful for the future and if so who should take the lead or be involved in developing any guidance?

Question 9. How do you think the appraisal and management plan would best be disseminated?

Question 10. Do you have any other concerns or observations you would like to make regarding the designation of a conservation area at Llanwrtyd Wells?

Question 11. Do you think this consultation document is laid out and explained clearly? Please identify any parts you find hard to understand or that are unclear to you.

Your Name:

Organisation (if applicable):

E-mail / telephone:

Address:

RESPONSES TO CONSULTATIONS MAY BE MADE PUBLIC (e.g. on the internet or via a report).