

Blymhill

Conservation Area Management Plan



South Staffordshire Council

Adopted 11 November 2010

Preface

South Staffordshire is a special place. Located cheek-by-jowl with the urban areas of the West Midlands conurbation and subject to constant pressure for development it still retains a strong rural character. Landscapes within the District change from one part to another, reflecting differences in the underlying geology and the location of villages within the landscape change too.

Our villages are a source of local pride and many are designated as conservation areas. Within these areas there are noticeable differences in many buildings in terms of their materials, designs and details. These variations, known as local distinctiveness, give individual character to different parts of the District.

Our first conservation areas were designated 40 years ago. The District was amongst the first in the country to do this and now has 19 conservation areas covering 16 of its villages and the entire lengths of the three canals which traverse it.

Designating a conservation area is not an end in itself. Local authorities need to develop policies which identify clearly what features of the area should be preserved or enhanced and set out how this can be done. Character Appraisals provide a clear assessment and definition of an area's interest and Management Plans set out the action needed to protect it. Within this the most important policy is a presumption against the loss of elements which have been identified in the character appraisal as making a positive contribution to the special interest for which the area was designated.

We make this presumption here in South Staffordshire and, together with our District-wide Village Design Guide, this Management Plan and Character Appraisal will provide all those involved in the development process with a clear statement of what we regard as special in our conservation areas and how we intend to preserve and enhance this.

Publication of this Management Plan and Character Appraisal of the Blymhill Conservation Area represents another important step forward for the Council in its commitment to the corporate aim: *'To be a Council which protects and enhances South Staffordshire's distinctive environment'*.

"I commend it to you wholeheartedly".

Councillor David Billson – Deputy Leader, Strategic Services



Prepared by:-

The Conservation Studio
1 Querns Lane
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 1RL

Tel: 01285 642428

Fax: 01285 642488

Email: info@theconservationstudio.co.uk

www.theconservationstudio.co.uk

Blymhill Conservation Area Management Plan

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1. Introduction

1.1 Format & derivation

1.1.1 This Management Plan sets out a mid-to long-term strategy in the form of a series of recommendations and guidelines for the Blymhill Conservation Area. It has been informed by an accompanying Character Appraisal document for the Conservation Area, which identified its special character and concluded by outlining some of the issues that it faces. This is presented as Appendix 1.

1.1.2 Proposals are split into generic and specific actions. The generic ones are tied in with general management principles, which are to be applied across all of South Staffordshire's 19 conservation areas. A new character appraisal document is being prepared for each of these conservation areas in order to inform these guidelines. The specific actions section is also informed by the findings of the Character Appraisal, but these are tailored to the specific nature of each individual conservation area.

1.2 Purpose & legislative context

1.2.1 This Management Plan sets out guidelines by which the special character of Blymhill Conservation Area can be preserved and enhanced. They will provide a basis for preparing new policies to achieve this.

1.2.2 The preparation of management plans for its conservation areas is one of the Council's statutory obligations under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This is discussed in more detail in Section 2.2 of the Character Appraisal [see Appendix 1].

1.2.3 In addition to the statutory requirement to produce these proposals, The Audit Commission also monitors the management of historic assets by local authorities as part of the overarching Best Value scheme. Best Value performance indicator BVPI 219c was a measure of how many up-to-date (i.e. less than five years old) management proposals local authorities had for their conservation areas.

1.2.4 This indicator is a driver for best practice in conservation area management and states: *'Public support for conservation areas as places that give identity to people and places is well established. This indicator will monitor how local authorities are managing their development.'* Although this indicator has now been deleted, the Council considers that up-to-date management plans are an important planning tool and remains committed to their production.

1.3 Local Plan & emerging LDF

1.3.1 Current planning policies for South Staffordshire, including those governing development and management of change in conservation areas, is laid out in the South Staffordshire Local Plan, adopted in December 1996. This is discussed in more detail in Section 2.3 of the Character Appraisal [see Appendix 1].

1.3.2 However, the Local Plan will be replaced eventually by a Local Development Framework (LDF), which is part of the new planning system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004.

1.3.3 This Management Plan and Character Appraisal document will sit alongside the conservation policies contained within the new LDF and will be complementary to its aims of preserving and enhancing the South Staffordshire's conservation areas.

1.4 Sustainability

1.4.1 The Council will adopt the above Management Plan and Character Appraisal as a Supplementary Planning Document. Their preparation adheres to the principles of sustainability as it underpins the new planning system. The thorough survey of the conservation area, the subsequent identification and in-depth analysis of special character and the partnership with the local community in the preparation of the documents all contribute to reaching the targets set for sustainability.

1.5 Consultation

1.5.1 In line with the increased emphasis on community engagement in the LDF, as well as the existing policies of South Staffordshire Council, the proposals contained in this document have undergone full public and stakeholder consultation before being adopted. Stakeholders have been consulted to inform the content of the documents and to contribute to the formation of the principles contained within them.

1.5.2 The findings of the Character Appraisal and proposals contained within the Management Plan were exhibited at Blymhill Village Hall on the afternoon of Wednesday 11th June 2008, at which 14 people attended. An open public meeting where the proposals contained within the Management Plan were described and discussed followed this.

1.5.3 A record was made of all pertinent comments and, wherever possible, these were accommodated within the final drafts of the Management Plan and Character Appraisal. Revised versions of both documents were made publicly available as downloadable pdfs on the Council's website and the final proposals featured as part of a day long exhibition held at the Council's offices on 7 October 2010.

1.5.4 South Staffordshire Council subscribes to the view expressed in the English Heritage document *Guidance on the management of conservation areas* (August 2005) regarding management proposals that: '*involving the local community in their development is essential if the proposals are to succeed.*'

1.6 Monitoring

1.6.1 South Staffordshire Council will seek to review these documents every five years, taking into account Government policy and English Heritage guidance. The contents of this review are outlined in Section 4 of this document. The principles of monitoring are based around creating a 'virtuous circle' of monitoring, review and action.

2. Blymhill Conservation Area - Generic actions

2.1 Policy

2.1.1 It is the Council's duty to preserve and enhance its conservation areas and retained policies in the Local Plan (adopted December 1996) fulfil this duty. Relevant policies for conservation areas are covered in Policies BE7, 9, 12, 14-19. Other policies including Green Belt, Historic Landscape Area, Ancient Woodland and others is detailed in Section 2.3 of the Character Appraisal [see Appendix 1].

2.1.2 The fundamental principles of good management of conservation areas are to be found in these policies, which will be carried forward to the emerging LDF. They can be related to the following set of generic management proposals for all of South Staffordshire's conservation areas, which have been informed by the appraisal documents (see 8.1 Issues).

2.1.3 Overarching aim: to maintain the urban character of village centres and the rural character on the periphery of conservation areas:

- Through the development control process (Policies BE7 & BE9);
- Controlling new shop fronts and signage (Policies BE14 to BE19);
- Addressing traffic issues (in cooperation with Staffordshire County Council);
- Control of boundaries (gates, fencing, walls) and building details (through consideration of designating Article 4(2) Directions to control minor works;
- Improving the quality of the public realm through new schemes and funding;
- Encouraging owners of historic buildings to carry out required repair or improvement through education or possible grant schemes;
- Creating a full Local List of important historic buildings;
- Regularly (every five years) carrying out a new appraisal of each conservation area, if necessary, and updating management proposals: monitoring change (see Section 4);
- Regularly (every five years) assessing the need for boundary changes and new

designations of conservation areas, and carrying out the changes should they be required;

- Regularly (every five years) carry out a survey to assess the condition of listed buildings.

2.2 Other guidance

2.2.1 South Staffordshire Council has adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on '*The Design of Shop fronts and signs in Conservation Areas*'.

2.2.2 These principles have also been included within the District-wide Village Design Guide, which was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on 15 September 2009 and sits within the emerging LDF.

2.2.3 English Heritage and other organisations can provide other guidance, such as specialist information regarding listed buildings, traditional construction methods and materials.

2.3 Development Control process

2.3.1 The system of considering planning applications for their suitability and conformity with national and local policies is long established and is based on more stringent criteria in conservation areas.

2.3.2 While there are additional policies concerning conservation areas and other parts of the historic environment, it is essential that these policies are applied consistently in the development control process.

2.3.3 Applications concerning land or properties within or close to a conservation area are referred to the Conservation Department of South Staffordshire Council. Within the usual period of time for consideration of an application, a conservation specialist will advise the planning officer assigned to the application whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character of a conservation area. The specialist will, therefore, advise on whether the application should be supported or refused on conservation grounds.

2.3.4 As an important figure in this process, the conservation specialist will be trained in the field of historic building conservation and/or planning, either through formal qualifications, long-term experience in the field, or both. The Skills Base Best Value Performance Indicator BVPI205 measures the suitability of persons for this and other specialist roles and South Staffordshire Council is committed to meeting these criteria for such specialist roles.

2.3.5 Consistency of approach to determining planning applications is at the centre of a fair system of controlling change, especially in conservation areas. Consistent decisions also lead to an improved public perception that the system is fair and, in turn, there is a greater public engagement with the process.

2.3.6 Design and development briefs should be promoted and encouraged as a matter of course on any substantial application in the conservation areas. Due to the significant lack of spare land available for development purposes, any new development is likely to have an impact on the appearance and character of a conservation area.

2.3.7 Therefore, there is a clear case for a coherent written argument in favour of the benefits of the proposal at the time of application. This could take the form of a letter, but ideally would be a more thorough development brief and include mock-up photographs that give an impression of how the proposal would look.

2.3.8 **ACTION:** *The Council will consult a conservation specialist on all development control proposals affecting the character of conservation areas.*

2.4 Enforcement strategy

2.4.1 In some cases the development control process is not fully adhered to and planning permission is not always sought or implemented correctly. In these cases it is important that enforcement action is swift and effective. This will reinforce the message that the development control process is fair and that it must be followed in all cases.

2.4.2 Usually, enforcement action does not result in legal action, but is resolved through effective communication between the Council representatives and relevant parties.

2.5 Street management

2.5.1 The recent appraisal programme has noted that there is a certain amount of room for improvement in the public realm in most of the conservation areas in South Staffordshire. While responsibility for the highways and for some associated street furniture lies with the County Council, the maintenance of most of the public realm is the responsibility of South Staffordshire Council. (For a detailed analysis of the public realm in the Blymhill Conservation Area see Section 5.4 in Appendix 1).

2.5.2 One common theme throughout the conservation areas is a lack of continuity in the design and fabric of the public realm. While there is a presumption in favour of traditional materials in conservation areas, it is not always practical or financially viable to use traditional materials in large-scale projects.

2.5.3 However, it should always be required that consideration is given to the effect that any new introductions to the public realm will have on the character of a conservation area and reasonable efforts be made to preserve that character with minor modifications to design. For example, traditional colours such as letterbox red should be preferred to more modern shades. Also, consideration should be given to the scale of new features, particularly street lights, and 'conservation' alternatives should be requested and considered when embarking on any large scale scheme of public realm replacement.

2.5.4 It is important that the conservation section is consulted early on regarding any proposals to affect material changes to conservation areas. They can often bring previous experience to the process, as well as a through understanding of the needs of an area.

2.5.5 **ACTION:** *The Council will consult a conservation specialist on all street management schemes affecting the character of conservation areas.*

2.6 Promotion & awareness

2.6.1 While it is often the conservation section that deals first hand with planning applications and other schemes in conservation areas, almost every department in the Council will deal with matters affecting them in some way. It is the responsibility of every employee to give regard to the special character of conservation areas and promote awareness of them to residents. An active Historic Environment Champion (see below) can be an effective way of encouraging understanding across Council departments.

2.7 Historic Environment Champions/Parish Councils

2.7.1 The Historic Environment Champion is a senior member of the Council, usually an elected member, who is nominated to promote historic environment issues at the highest level of the organisation. The Champion can, therefore, play an important role in raising the profile of conservation in general and ensuring that key strategic decisions are taken with a full consideration of their potential effect on the historic environment. This role will be optimised if the champion has a through knowledge of the state of South Staffordshire's historic environment and regular liaison with the conservation section.

2.7.2 Parish Councils and other local bodies are also useful contributors to the process and are consulted for their opinion of planning applications in their localities. The wealth of knowledge contained within Parish Councils is a valuable resource when identifying local character and strong ties with the conservation section are encouraged.

2.8 Education/community involvement

2.8.1 An active engagement with the local community should be sustained after the consultation over the appraisal and management proposal documents. The documents should be promoted in the community as useful aides in identifying and retaining what is important

in their area. This, in turn, should promote a sense of ownership that will foster an improved level of understanding of the importance of preserving and enhancing special character.

2.8.2 **ACTION:** *The Council will seek stronger ties with local bodies and interest groups and promote the continued involvement of the local community in managing and enhancing the character of its conservation areas.*

2.9 Production of further guidance/leaflets

2.9.1 A new shop front design and signage guide would help to improve the main shopping area's appearance and enshrine guidance within the emerging LDF. The principles included in the existing guide have been carried forward into the new District-wide Village Design Guide SPD, adopted on 15 September 2009 and sitting within the LDF.

2.9.2 **ACTION:** *The Council will consider preparing and issuing additional design guidance and leaflets as and when appropriate. This may be in response to the continued review of conservation areas in South Staffordshire or other indicators.*

3. Blymhill Conservation Area – Specific actions

In addition to the general proposals, which are to preserve and enhance the conservation areas and to maintain a good knowledge base of them through monitoring and appraisal (as outlined in Section 2), the following actions relate specifically to Blymhill Conservation Area

3.1 Conservation Area boundary review

3.1.1 The survey has concluded that the current designated boundary accurately reflects the special character of Blymhill.

3.1.2 **ACTION:** *None.*

3.1.3 **Buffer Zones**

The identification of a 'Buffer Zone' would recognise the impact that development there could have on the Conservation Area. One such Buffer Zone is proposed for Blymhill:

The fields immediately surrounding the Conservation Area, with the exception of those to the northwest as this part is protected by existing development and land use.

These proposed changes are shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map, which is included in the Character Appraisal [see pp. 20-21].

3.1.4 **ACTION:** *The Council will recognise the importance of the affect of buffer zone land on the character of the Conservation Area.*

3.1.5 **ACTION:** *The Council will continue reviewing the District's conservation areas, including the three encompassing the canals, in order to ensure that each area is included within the most suitable conservation area boundary.*

3.2 Site & building enhancements

3.2.1 On the whole, the buildings in the Blymhill Conservation Area are well maintained although some of them could be improved by the removal of some unattractive modern additions or through improved maintenance standards. These include:

- Blymhill Village Hall
- Garages east of No.47 Brockhurst Lane
- Extensions to Village Farm
- Kings Barn
- Jubilee Grove

3.2.2 Some sites in the Conservation Area would benefit from improvements to their open areas:

- The wide driveway, which acts as a surface car park, next to the village hall
- The grassed area next to the village hall

3.2.3 **ACTION:** *The Council will seek to ensure that further developments in the Blymhill Conservation Area respect its historic character. Schemes that are not of a design or scale that is sympathetic to the character of Blymhill Conservation Area will be resisted, where appropriate.*

3.2.4 **ACTION:** *The Council will encourage the redevelopment of sites or buildings which make a negative contribution, to ensure that the character or appearance of the conservation area is enhanced.*

3.3 Setting, views, gateways & buffer zones

3.3.1 The setting of a conservation area is very important. It has been established that development that affects views into and out of a conservation area can affect its special architectural or historic interest. Development that impacts in a detrimental way upon the immediate setting and longer views into and from a conservation area can detract from its special character. The proposals therefore include the identification of areas of land around the Blymhill Conservation Area as a buffer zone [see Section 3.1.3 above].

3.3.2 Development in this zone can have an effect on the special interest of the Conservation Area and as such development proposals here will be assessed against the impact that they will have on the character of the Conservation Area. Important views are identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map in the Character Appraisal [see pp. 20-21].

3.3.3 ACTION: *The Council will seek to ensure that development within the buffer zone preserves or enhances the special interest of the conservation area and causes no harm to that special interest.*

3.3.4 ACTION: *The Council will also seek to ensure that these views remain protected from inappropriate forms of development and that due regard is paid to them in the formulation of public realm works or enhancement schemes.*

3.3.5 ACTION: *The Council will require new development in and around the village to respect the character of Blymhill in terms of density and scale.*

3.4 Amenity space

3.4.1 Blymhill benefits from a small area of public open space that contributes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is important that the standard to which the area is maintained is upheld in the future.

3.4.2 ACTION: *The Council will continue to work with other agencies such as Blymhill Parish Council and Staffordshire County Council to ensure that the open spaces are well maintained and enhanced, as appropriate.*

3.5 Traffic signs

3.5.1 Signs and notices often spoil the visual attractiveness of the place. While traffic signs are obviously necessary, many are ill sited and there may be an over provision.

3.5.2 ACTION: *The Council will seek to compile an audit of all road signage and street furniture in the Conservation Area with a view to bringing about a simplified and better-coordinated approach in line with the principles set out in English Heritage's latest 'Streets For All' publication.*

3.6 Trees & landscape

3.6.1 All trees are protected within conservation areas by the requirement for

landowners to notify the Council of their intention to lop or trim them. Tree Preservation Orders provide an additional protection for significant trees and groups of trees, where any proposed action requires consent from the local planning authority.

3.6.2 Within the Blymhill Conservation Area; it is expected that any development would respect the role of trees within the Conservation Area, and ensure that they would continue to preserve and enhance its special character.

3.6.3 ACTION: *The Council will seek to prepare a Tree Management Programme, identifying all mature trees within the Conservation Area (privately as well as publicly owned) and ensuring that priorities are agreed and funding set aside for the costs involved in remedial works or replacement.*

3.7 Statutory & local list

3.7.1 While some of Blymhill's historic buildings are included on the statutory list, other buildings do not fit the strict criteria for listing but are important in the local area.

3.7.2 The Council is in the process of compiling a list of Buildings of Special Local Interest; the criteria for which are described in Section 6.3 of the Character Appraisal [see Appendix 1].

3.7.3 Section 6.3.3 of the Character Appraisal [see Appendix 1] lists a number of buildings identified as part of the survey work undertaken for the preparation of this Management Plan for consideration for inclusion on the Council's local list. These are identified on the Locally Listed Buildings Map presented as Appendix 5.

3.7.4 ACTION: *The Council will compile a list of Buildings of Special Local Interest (i.e. a 'local list') and develop policies promoting their retention and improvement. This will include the properties identified in Section 6.3.3 of the Character Appraisal [see Appendix 1].*

3.8 Grants – assessment of existing & potential for new schemes

3.8.1 There are currently no local or national grant schemes available to promote new schemes in Blymhill that could preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

3.8.2 One potential new scheme could be modest landscaping and renewal of furniture in the open areas around the village hall.

3.8.3 **ACTION:** *The Council will consider starting new grant schemes and working with other local and national bodies to create new grant schemes that could preserve or enhance the character of the Blymhill Conservation Area.*

3.9 Buildings at Risk/ Urgent Works Notices

3.9.1 South Staffordshire Council has completed a survey of listed buildings and will publish a report on their condition. None of the sites included on English Heritage's *Heritage At Risk Register* for South Staffordshire lie within the Conservation Area.

3.9.2 Generally it appears that all of the listed buildings in the Conservation Area are in good condition and it seems unlikely that there would be any need for Urgent Works Notices to be served in the short or medium term.

3.9.3 **ACTION:** *The Council will publish a Buildings at Risk Register for all listed buildings in the district and will develop policies to address the issues identified in the register.*

4. Monitoring

4.1 As recommended by English Heritage, this document should be reviewed every five years from the date of its formal adoption. It will need to be assessed in the light of the emerging LDF and government policy generally. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the Conservation Area including a full photographic survey to aid possible enforcement action;
- An assessment of whether the various recommendations detailed in this document have been acted upon, and how successful this has been;
- The identification of any new issues which need to be addressed, requiring further actions or enhancements;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and any necessary action;
- Publication of an updated edition of the Management Plan.

4.2 It is possible that the local community, under the guidance of a heritage consultant or the Council, could carry out this review. This would enable the local community to become more involved with the process and would raise public consciousness of the issues, including the problems associated with enforcement.

4.3 This will monitor the changes that have occurred through the continuous processes of development and through individual changes of use. The purpose is to re-evaluate the special character of a conservation area to reach decisions about whether the area still warrants designation, and to check that the boundaries are sufficiently clear in demarcating changes in character.

4.4 It is intended that a photographic record be made of each area at the time of the publication of the appraisal or the time of its reissue following a review, so that changes are monitored.

Appendix 1

Blymhill Conservation Area Appraisal

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1. Summary

1.1 It is the conclusion of this Character Appraisal of the Blymhill Conservation Area that its key characteristics are those of:

- A historic rural village focused around a church, school, schoolhouse and rectory next to the long winding Brockhurst Lane;
- A well-preserved example of an historic medieval agricultural village, which also served as an estate village to Weston Park from the 19th century;
- Historic buildings and other structures, with 11 listed examples in the Conservation Area, including a church (Grade I), a school and schoolhouse, a rectory, 17th century timber framed cottages and farmhouses and churchyard walls, gates and memorials;
- A rural setting characterised by hedge-lined lanes and large farmhouses set in large plots with farm buildings and cottages scattered around them;
- A topography that, to the east, gives extensive views over the neighbouring countryside, which reinforces the spacious character of this dispersed settlement;
- Historic boundaries including sandstone walling, red brick walling and ornate cast iron railings;
- Some modern development interspersed with the historic buildings;
- A church, former school house and the village hall, which act as the hubs of commercial and social activity;
- Some groups of trees although many areas cleared for farming.



2. Introduction

2.1 The Blymhill Conservation Area

2.1.1 South Staffordshire Council designated the Blymhill Conservation Area on 6th September 1977. The Conservation Area covers the historic core of the village of Blymhill, which stretches along the linear route of Brockhurst Lane and extends southwards to include St Mary's Church and an ancient moated site. It forms a relatively self-contained area that includes a number of historic buildings.

2.1.2 Blymhill is a small and scattered rural village close to the Shropshire border. It lies within its own parish along with the neighbouring hamlet of Brineton. The manor is historically linked with the Earl of Bradford and his estate at Weston Park and is still largely rural in appearance. The quiet village of Blymhill has no shops or public houses but a number of working farms.

2.1.3 In the 21st century the village lanes retain their historic layout and rural charm, with wide gaps between buildings, groups of mature trees and expansive views over the countryside. Very few modern buildings have been introduced to the village and it retains the appearance of an historic agricultural community.

2.2 The purpose of a conservation area Character Appraisal

2.2.1 Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as '*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'.

2.2.2 Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

2.2.3 Planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment are set out in *PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment*. In addition, guidance to help practitioners implement this policy is provided in the accompanying *Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide*.

2.2.4 In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Blymhill Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It is in conformity with English Heritage guidance as set out in *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* and *Guidance on the management of conservation areas* (both August 2005). This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the Blymhill Conservation Area and identify the issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area (in the form of a 'Character Appraisal').

2.2.5 The Conservation Studio carried out survey work for these documents in January 2008, when a full photographic record was also taken of the area and its buildings. Unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution, trees, water courses, views and areas and buildings for enhancement were noted amongst other matters and recorded on a Townscape Appraisal Map (see Appendix 4). Additionally the existing boundary of the Conservation Area was carefully surveyed and proposals drawn up for a number of changes. The omission of any particular feature does not imply that it is of no significance.

2.3 The planning policy context

2.3.1 This document therefore provides a firm basis on which applications for future development within the Blymhill Conservation Area can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework as set out in Staffordshire County Council's Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 and in South Staffordshire Council's South Staffordshire Local Plan, adopted in December 1996.

2.3.2 In the Local Plan, Inset Plan 4 confirms that the following policies apply to the Blymhill Conservation Area or to the land that surrounds it:

- Conservation Area Policies: BE7, 9, 12, 14-19
- Open Countryside Policies OC1, C1-4, 8 & 13

These policies are detailed in Appendix 2.

2.3.3 A Local Development Framework (LDF) is being prepared to help to shape a sustainable future for South Staffordshire. It will replace the existing Local Plan (adopted 1996) and set out the District's spatial planning strategy to 2026. The LDF will combine a number of statutory and non-statutory documents to set out planning policies and proposals to guide the District's development. The statutory ones are known as Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and, together with the West Midlands' Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), will form part of the Development Plan for South Staffordshire. For further information on the LDF please contact: The Development Plans Team on 01902 696317; email: developmentplans@sstaffs.gov.uk.



3. Location & Landscape Setting

3.1 Location & activities

3.1.1 Blymhill is located to the north of Wolverhampton, about six miles northeast of Shifnal and six miles northwest of Brewood. The village of Weston-under-Lizard lies directly to the south and Blymhill was formerly part of the Earl of Bradford's Weston Park Estate and housed some of the estate workers. The rural settlements of Lower Beighterton, Brineton and Brockhurst are scattered around Blymhill.

3.1.2 The village is in a rural setting that remains undeveloped and is mainly ancillary to the farms that are contained within the Conservation Area. The surrounding countryside is unspoilt and crossed only by minor country roads and farm tracks. No major trunk roads run through or around the village although Watling Street (A5) is located about two miles to the south.

3.1.3 Activity within the Conservation Area is mainly related to residential and agricultural uses. There is a church, a school and a village hall, which serve the community and inject some vitality into the settlement. However, due to the small size of the village there are no shops or other facilities, although there is a former post office on the corner of School Lane.

3.2 Topography & geology

3.2.1 Most of Blymhill stands on level ground, although the church is on a slightly raised area to the southwest of the centre of the village and High Hall Farm stands on top of a hill or escarpment edge at the far south eastern corner of the Conservation Area. Brockhurst Lane twists and ascends up the hillside to the farm in the south. From the elevated location at High Hall Farm there are extensive views over the countryside towards the Shropshire border. This and the middle distance views to the north and south afforded through the considerable gaps between buildings along Brockhurst Lane, help give Blymhill its spacious rural appearance.

3.2.2 The village soil is a gravelly loam and the surrounding countryside has a mixture of soils, including light and mixed loams and sand. Historically, marl pits, sand pits and gravel pits were dug in and around the village and are marked



Images from Top to Bottom

- Blymhill is surrounded by open countryside
- The winding nature of Brockhurst Lane affords changing vistas
- Grove Farm and barn

on early maps. The soft sandstone rock that is also found in the wider area is used in the distinctive boundary walls, notably around the church. The church itself was constructed of sandstone and its 19th century refurbishment also used the material.

3.3 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

3.3.1 The Blymhill Conservation Area is encircled by farmland. Its isolated setting is an important factor in the identification and maintenance of its traditional rural appearance. Other isolated small settlements lie around it, such as Brineton and Blymhill Lawn, although these are not within sight of the Conservation Area and do not visually link up with the village.

3.3.2 Small hamlets and villages lie scattered across the Staffordshire countryside on all sides of Blymhill. Modern infrastructure intrudes on this rural scene minimally. Neither Watling Street to the south nor the A41 to the west have any visual or aural affect on the Conservation Area.



Images from Top to Bottom

- Blymhill has distinctive stone boundary walls
- Farmland encircles the Blymhill Conservation Area
- Scattered hamlets linked by winding lanes are a feature of Blymhill

4. Historic development & archaeology

4.1 Historic development

4.1.1 Blymhill has early origins as a farming community and Robert de Stafford held the manor at the time of Domesday in 1086, at which point it was known as 'Brumhelle'. The name possibly derives from 'wild plum tree hill' or 'iron bloom shaped hill' and is of Saxon origin. At Domesday the population of Blymhill was 12.

4.1.2 Throughout the Middle Ages, Blymhill appears to have remained a small quiet agricultural village, although a church was built in the 12th century, and rebuilt and extended in the 13th and 14th centuries, indicating that it was the social centre for the area. Medieval moated sites at Brockhurst and to the west of Blymhill Grange show that the area was occupied and held some strategic importance, probably due to the hillside location. The sites are likely to have been constructed during the peak period of construction between 1250 and 1350. It is believed that the site of High Hall Farm is the location of the manor house of the first lord of Blymhill, William Bagot, from around 1150.

4.1.3 In 1522 there were only five families recorded in Blymhill although the number of households in Blymhill and Brineton had risen to 52 by 1666. By the mid 17th century a manor house had been built on the hill overlooking the village (now High Hall Farm) and there was a large enough population to warrant some level of schooling in the village from at least 1671. It was around this time that the earliest domestic buildings in the Conservation Area were built, such as the Black and White Cottage on the southern corner of School Lane and Brockhurst Lane, No.2 Rectory Cottages and the High Hall. The church was rebuilt again in 1719 and around this time other buildings in the village were built or rebuilt. These include Grove Farmhouse and the Rectory although both were substantially altered later.

4.1.4 The manor passed through many private hands from the 17th century until part of the manor was sold to Thomas Earl of Bradford in 1756. The Earls of Bradford resided at Weston Park, a fine 17th century country house designed by Lady Elizabeth Wilbraham. The house and some of the estate lies to the south of Watling Street, although the parkland extends northwards to Blymhill. Baron



Images from Top to Bottom

- Speed's map of Blymhill
- The Church of St Mary
- Looking along School Lane with Black & White Cottage to the left and the old Post Office, right

Bradford acquired parts of Blymhill manor in 1794 and his son acquired more in 1824. From the early 19th century the village was used to house estate workers from Weston Park

4.1.5 It was mainly due to the contributions of the Earl of Bradford that the Church of St Mary was extensively restored between 1856 and 1859 to the designs of G.E. Street. A schoolhouse and rectory were also built to Street's designs and these buildings stand to the north and east of the church, respectively. The Church of St Mary was the largest and most important place of worship in the area as evidenced by the prestigious early 19th century memorials that survive in the churchyard today. The road network through the village was formalised with the enclosure of fields in 1840, by which time the population of the parish was 633.

4.1.6 The 1880 Ordnance Survey map shows all of the key historic buildings in Blymhill: the church, school, rectory, High Hall and The Grange (Blymhill Grange). The distinctive church site at the southern end of two lanes that lead from Brockhurst Lane is clearly marked and farm tracks lead through the neighbouring countryside, including part of the Weston Park Estate. Other features such as sand pits and gravel pits are also shown, along with the post office (No. 47 Brockhurst Lane) and a smithy.

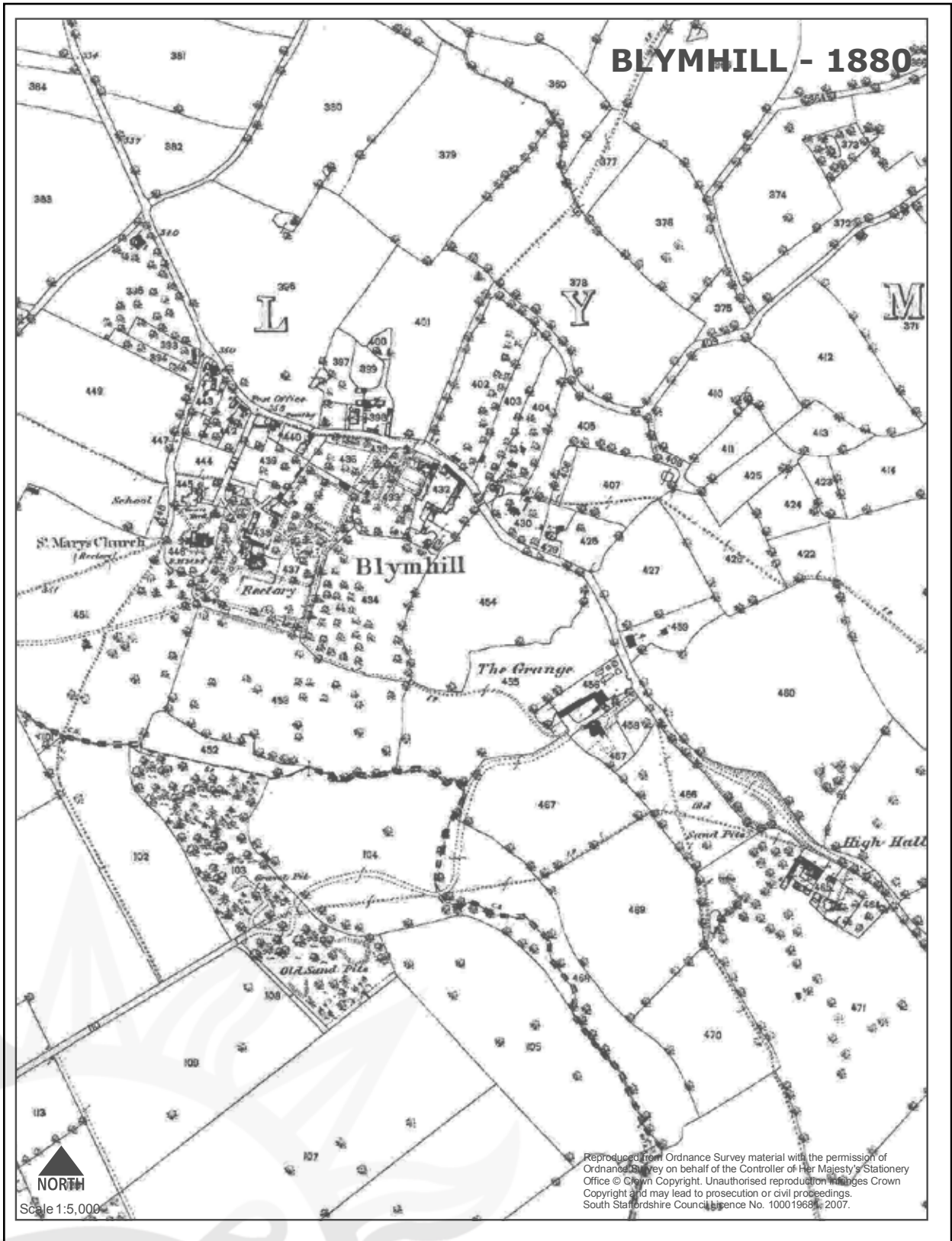
4.1.7 The 1901 and 1917 maps show no change in the built form at all in Blymhill over the next 40 years. This shows that the community had achieved equilibrium and that the lord at Weston Park had no need to provide additional accommodation in the village. One minor change of use was the transference of the post office to what is now called Old Post Office Cottage by the time of the survey for the 1917 map. The absence of street and field boundary trees from these surveys gives clearer indications of the built form in Blymhill at this time. However, it is still clear that this was a sparsely populated rural settlement and Blymhill was noted for its rich natural habitat, including wild flowers such as the purple flowered moneywort.

4.1.8 Small changes took place in Blymhill after the Second World War. The Earl of Bradford built four workers cottages opposite Rectory Cottages in 1947, which matched similar houses that he provided in neighbouring hamlets such as



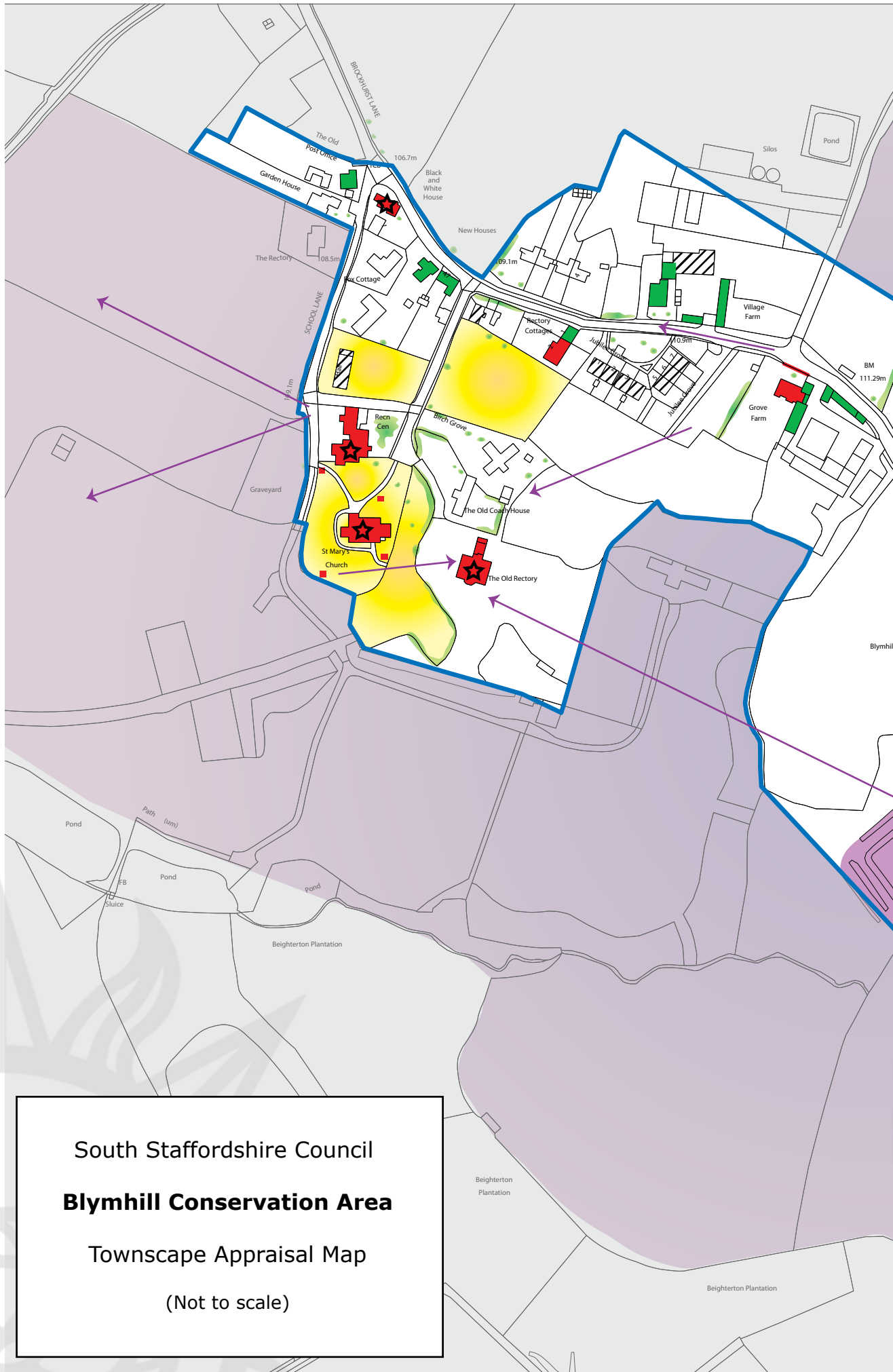
Images from Top to Bottom

- G E Street's restored church with his schoolhouse to the left
- The schoolhouse at Blymhill
- An estate cottage built by the Earl of Bradford
- Brickkiln Cottage and the brickkiln remains at Great Chatwell

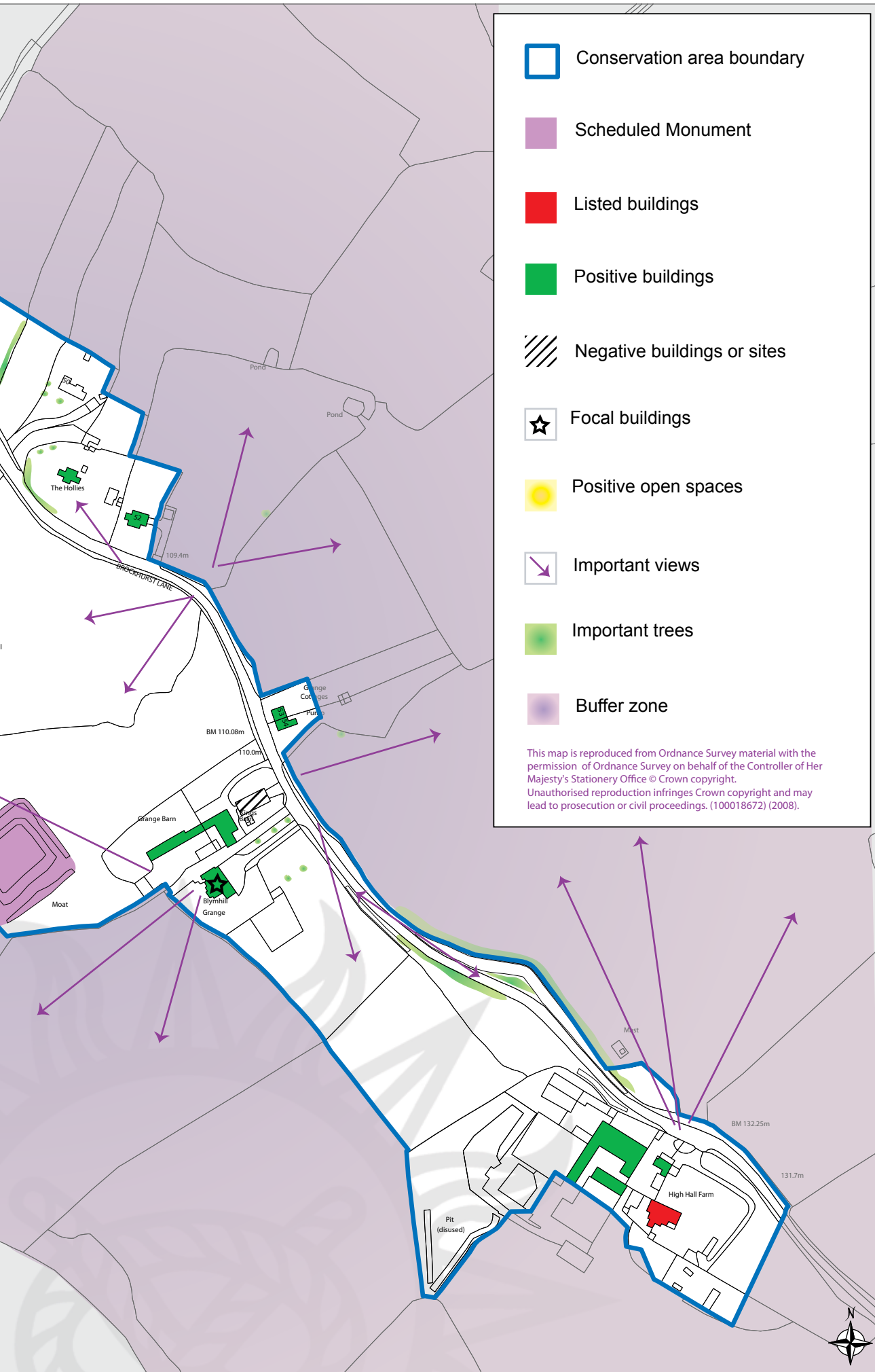


Image

- Blymhill - Ordnance Survey Map 1880



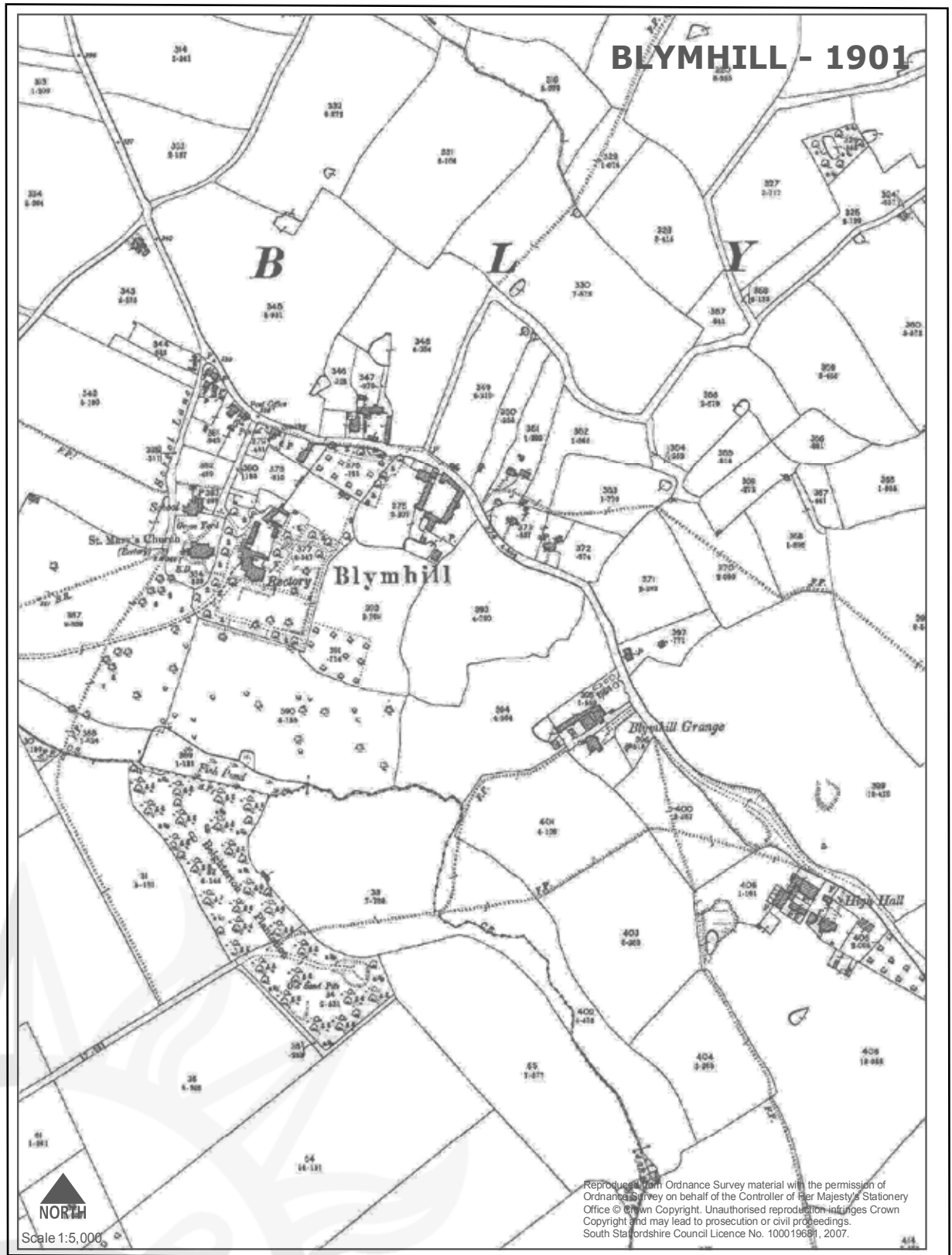
South Staffordshire Council
Blymhill Conservation Area
Townscape Appraisal Map
(Not to scale)



-  Conservation area boundary
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Listed buildings
-  Positive buildings
-  Negative buildings or sites
-  Focal buildings
-  Positive open spaces
-  Important views
-  Important trees
-  Buffer zone

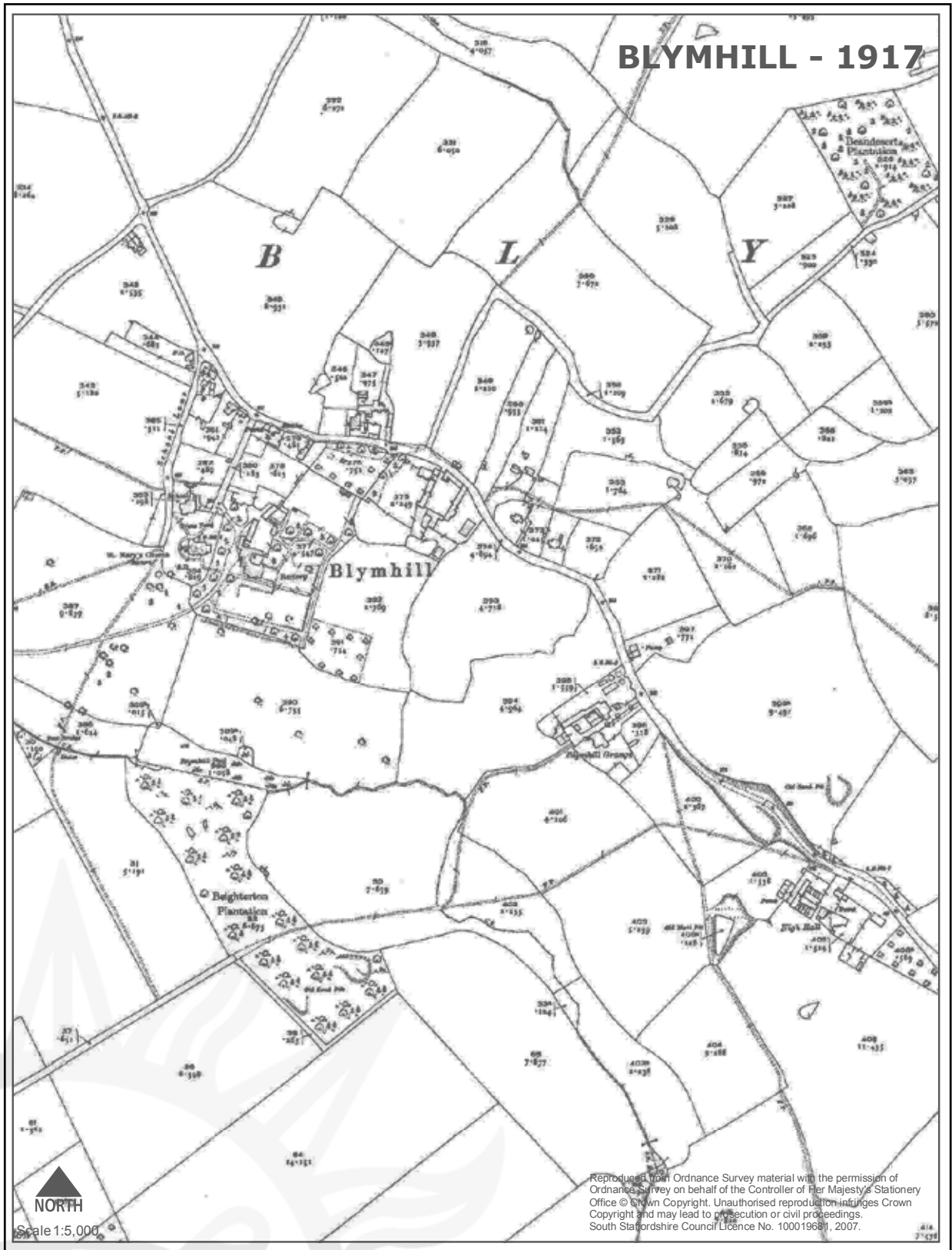
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Image

- Blymhill - Ordnance Survey Map 1901



Image

- Blymhill - Ordnance Survey Map 1917

Brineton. Blymhill retained its very loose knit rural village appearance as other houses were built, notably Jubilee Grove in the late 1970s and two detached houses in School Lane in the 1990s. Other development of the village has been limited to a few individual houses, small outbuildings and garages as well as some replacement agricultural buildings.

4.1.9 In the latter half of the 20th century facilities such as the Post Office and school have closed. However, the school is still in use as a day nursery and education centre and there are proposals to redevelop the somewhat dilapidated village hall in the near future to provide more up-to-date social facilities for the community.

4.2 Archaeology

4.2.1 There are 18 records on Staffordshire County Historic Environment Record for Blymhill and its immediate surroundings. These include a supposed site of the medieval manor house at High Hall; a timber framed Mill House, the site of the 18th century windmill, a medieval moated site near Blymhill Grange, medieval ridge and furrow field patterns, a landscape park around Blymhill Rectory and listed buildings descriptions.

4.2.2 Apart from the moated site by Blymhill Grange there is also visible evidence of earthworks to the south west of The Croft (No. 50 Brockhurst Lane). This may be the remnant of a former pit or the ridge and furrow markings noted above.



Images from Top to Bottom

- Blymhill rectory
- Chatwell Lodge, Great Chatwell

5. Spatial analysis

5.1 Plan, form & layout

5.1.1 Blymhill is a dispersed village focused around the church, rectory and schoolhouse. The settlement stretches along a winding country lane to include four substantial farmhouses separated by fields and farmyards, and a scattering of estate cottages around them. The majority of the cottages are located to the north of the church.

5.1.2 Following the Enclosure Act of 1812, the lands around Blymhill were enclosed in 1827 and divided between Lord Bradford and John and Joseph Stubbs. The road network was then formalised to provide access to the enclosed farmland.

5.1.3 The main roads, such as Brockhurst Lane and School Lane, would have existed as tracks before this time but may have had their courses altered to accommodate the new use of the land. Narrow farm tracks still branch out into the surrounding fields and ridge and furrow marks around the village suggest that strip farming in the area dates back at least to medieval times.

5.1.4 Throughout the Conservation Area small groups of buildings line the road, either facing it or set at right angles to the road edge. At the west end of Brockhurst Lane there are modestly sized cottages and houses in relatively small plots. To the south, the church and neighbouring large buildings are set in more generous plots and form a small group that relate to each other rather than the road that peters out by the entrance to the churchyard. The open space around the village hall and in the paddock opposite enhances the rural setting around the church.

5.1.5 Further east along Brockhurst Lane is the tighter built form of Jubilee Grove set behind suburban style communal garden space before giving way to the more open rural appearance of the land opposite and next to Grove Farm. The rest of the Conservation Area is characterised by open spaces dotted with small, detached houses and pairs of estate cottages and another farmhouse with accompanying barns and outhouses. These buildings front the lane as it leads up the hill to High Hall Farm.



Images from Top to Bottom

- Looking along Brockhurst Lane towards Black & White Cottage
- Jubilee Grove
- Grove Farm

5.2 Landmarks, focal points & views

5.2.1 The landmark buildings, as identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map [see Appendix 4], provide focal points within the Conservation Area through their position as individual or corner buildings and their striking architecture. These are St Mary's Church, the Old Schoolhouse, School, The Old Rectory and Blymhill Grange.

5.2.2 St Mary's Church is the most important landmark in Blymhill, dominating the western corner of the Conservation Area. It forms an important group with the school, schoolhouse and The Old Rectory. Together these mark the historic focal point of the village, although The Old Rectory is largely hidden by trees, except through a clearing to the south of the church.

5.2.3 The church is notable for its medieval structure and the 19th century restoration work in the Early English style, by G.E. Street, which is well-regarded. Street also designed the churchyard walls, gates, which frame the church handsomely, and the school and schoolhouse. The rectory is a large rendered brick building, which has an impact on the landscape despite surrounding tree cover and is a landmark on the views west from Grange Barn and the moated site on the hillside leading to High Hall Farm.

5.2.4 The Black and White Cottage is a prominent structure on the corner of School Lane and Brockhurst Lane at the entrance to the village. This relatively large cottage features a striking façade of white painted brick with black painted timbers, a steep tile roof with eyebrow dormer and a well-tended cottage garden.

5.2.5 Blymhill Grange is another landmark building, standing resolutely tall in the landscape (and significantly extended beyond its original form) at the end of a long drive next to farmland and single storey farm buildings. It differs from other farmhouse buildings in the village as it does not blend into its setting, neither being screened by substantial tree cover or taller ancillary structures.

5.2.6 The views in and out of the Conservation Area are extensive and important due to the topography, the loose placement of buildings and the general lack of large tree groups. The principal



Images from Top to Bottom

- Black & White Cottage looking towards School Lane
- The Church of St Mary, Blymhill
- Blymhill Grange

long view out of the designated area is from the field entrance opposite the entrance to High Hall Farm looking north and east.

5.2.7 There are many other important views across the surrounding countryside from key locations, which are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map [see Appendix 4].

5.3 Open spaces, trees & landscape

5.3.1 The Conservation Area is notable for the openness of the built form, except for Jubilee Grove. This openness is derived from grass verges along some parts of the roads and front gardens to many houses, which, together with the generous expanse of the fields and the churchyard, provide a considerable amount of open space. In the far west of the Conservation Area there is less open space, which is exaggerated by the tall hedges that line Brockhurst lane around the junction with School Lane.

5.3.2 Trees make an important contribution to the character of this rural Conservation Area and mature specimens line the roads and are planted in groups around the church, the rectory and on the hillside leading up to High Hall Farm. Further trees are visible in the surrounding landscape, particularly in the views north and south from Brockhurst Lane. These trees and the rolling rural landscape itself provide an important green backdrop to the Conservation Area. Many of the houses and fields have hedging on their front and side boundaries, which introduces more greenery to the Conservation Area. Important trees are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map [see Appendix 4].

5.4 Public realm

5.4.1 The public realm – the pavements, footpaths, street surfaces, street lighting and signage – is mixed although it is mostly of modern construction.

5.4.2 *Paving*

In keeping with its historic rural character, very few of the Conservation Area's roads and lanes have pavements. The only example is a section of modern pavement outside Jubilee Grove, which terminates outside Grove Farm. It is covered in tarmac and with concrete kerbs.



Images from Top to Bottom

- High Hall Farm
- Trees visible in the surrounding landscape
- Tall hedges lining Brockhurst Lane
- Blymhill has a general lack of paving

All the roadways are covered in black tarmacadam, although narrow strips of grass line much of the southeastern part of Brockhurst Lane. The footpath through the churchyard is also tarmacadam.

5.4.3 **Street lighting**

Streetlights are positioned along Brockhurst Lane and take the form of tall steel standards with 'hockey-stick' style overhanging lanterns. Further east along the lane, the lamps are fixed to telegraph poles and, therefore, make little impact on the street scene.

5.4.4 **Street signs**

The street signs in the Conservation Area are modern and fixed to the pavement on steel supports or directly onto boundary walls. Modern highway signs in the Conservation Area include those referring to a T-junction at the entrance to School Lane, farm animals in the road, a public footpath and speed limits. There is also a modern village name sign on Brockhurst Lane and an old timber sign pointing to the church from the corner of Brockhurst Lane.

5.4.5 **Other features**

- A large mobile telephone mast stands behind the trees on the edge of the field on the hillside opposite High Hall Farm;
- A stile at the entrance to the public footpath leading through the fields to Brockhurst on the north side of Brockhurst Lane;
- Children's play equipment in the paddock opposite the village hall, and;
- Three notice boards in the Conservation Area: one is located behind the schoolhouse; another to the rear of the churchyard, and a third on the corner of Brockhurst Lane and the small lane leading to the church.



Images from Top to Bottom

- Some streetlamps are fixed to telegraph poles
- Welcome to Blymhill
- Noticeboard in Brockhurst Lane, corner of School Lane

6. The buildings of the Conservation Area

6.1 Building types

6.1.1 Most of the historic buildings in the Conservation Area are residential and take the form of small two storey cottages, large two storey detached houses and former farmhouses with outbuildings. A small number of modern residential houses are interspersed between the historic buildings on School Lane and Brockhurst Lane, while the majority of post-war construction in the parish has taken place to the south, outside the Conservation Area boundary.

6.1.2 Other building types include a place of worship (St Mary's Church), a village hall and farmhouses.

6.2 Listed buildings

6.2.1 A listed building is one that is included on the government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. These buildings are protected by statute law, and consent is required from South Staffordshire Council before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out. Further information can be found in South Staffordshire Council's Local Plan, adopted in December 1996.

6.2.2 There are 11 listed buildings or structures in the Blymhill Conservation Area. They are all listed Grade II, apart from the Church of St Mary, which is Grade I. These are:

- St Mary's Church, which has some remaining 13th and 14th century structure, including the tower, but was comprehensively restored by G.E. Street in 1856-9. It is built of red sandstone ashlar with white sandstone dressings. (The churchyard walls, gates and gate piers are listed separately as Grade II);
- Three early 19th century memorials are individually listed Grade II;
- Blymhill School and attached school house was designed by G.E. Street at the time of the refurbishment of St Mary's Church. It is built of sandstone in a Gothic style with large windows featuring tracery facing the church from gables set in a steeply pitched tile roof. The School House appears to have uPVC windows installed.



Images from Top to Bottom

- Modern houses on Brockhurst Lane
- The Church of St Mary, Blymhill
- The former Blymhill School buildings

- The Old Rectory is a two-storey house built in the 1770s and rebuilt and altered in the 19th and 20th centuries. This large house has distinctive rendered elevations and timber sash windows. Wide chimneystacks project from the slate roof;
- The Black and White Cottage is a single storey 17th century timber framed cottage with attic. This formerly thatched dwelling has white painted brick infill panels and has been altered and extended;
- No.2 Rectory Cottages is a 17th century timber framed cottage tucked behind a more recent attached cottage. It faces south east, at right angles to the road with three dormer windows set in a clean red brick façade;
- Grove Farmhouse is a mid 18th century building standing close to the edge of the road behind cast iron railings. The two-storey building has a painted brick façade and tile roof. An attached building to the rear features a distinctive roof lantern with weather vane;
- High Hall is a 17th century red brick farmhouse with stone quoins and a steeply pitched tile roof. The building is set back from the road and forms part of a working farm with a mixture of modern and historic buildings filling the farmyard.



6.3 Locally listed buildings

6.3.1 South Staffordshire Council is compiling a list of locally important buildings; ones which may not meet national criteria for listing but which are nonetheless important to the people of this district. Locally listed buildings will add to the local street scene, be built in a distinctive local style, or have a particular connection with a well-known local person or event. Buildings or structures on the forthcoming local list will not be given statutory protection similar to nationally listed buildings, but by being locally listed their importance will be recognised and taken into account during any future planning decisions affecting them.

6.3.2 Three grades of local listing will be used:

Grade A

Buildings close to the national criteria for listing. These buildings may be put forward for statutory listing when an opportunity presents itself, or when their future is imminently threatened.

Images from Top to Bottom

- The Old Rectory
- Black & White Cottage on the corner of School Lane
- Grove Farmhouse

Grade B

Buildings or structures with a particular local character or style that have a special significance to people through their contribution to their locality, or to the street or rural scene, and which warrant steps to be taken to ensure their retention.

Grade C

Buildings or structures with special local importance or a particular association with local events or people and which are thus important to the history and development of a village or area, and are therefore worthy of retention.

6.3.3 As a result of the extensive survey carried out for this Character Appraisal, the following buildings in Blymhill are being proposed for inclusion on the Local List:

Grade A

- Brockhurst Lane: K6 telephone kiosk

Grade B

- Brockhurst Lane: The Old Post Office, Village Farmhouse, The Hollies, Grange Cottages

6.3.4 **Please Note:** Buildings which are curtilage structures of statutory listed buildings, and therefore protected by this designation, have not been considered for the Local List so as to not risk confusion over their already considerable protection. The omission of any particular building does not imply that it is of no significance.

6.3.5 All of these have been identified as 'positive' buildings as part of this appraisal (see below). The Council may add further buildings to the Local List, in addition to those already suggested, once this appraisal has been formally adopted. This issue is considered in the Management Plan. These proposed Locally Listed Buildings are shown on the map presented as Appendix 5.

6.4 Positive buildings

6.4.1 In addition to listed buildings, the Conservation Area contains a large number of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to its character and have townscape merit. These are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map as 'positive buildings' and in many cases they are also



Images from Top to Bottom

- K6 telephone kiosk outside the Old Post Office in School Lane
- Village Farmhouse
- The Hollies

proposed for inclusion on the Local List. This follows advice provided in English Heritage guidance on conservation area character appraisals, and in paragraph HE10.1 of PPS5, both of which stress the importance of identifying and protecting such buildings.

6.4.2 The criteria used for selection of positive buildings are those set out in Appendix 2 of English Heritage's Guidance on conservation area appraisals (2006). Where a building has been adversely affected by modern changes and restoration is either impractical or indeed, not possible, they are excluded.

6.4.3 The positive buildings are:

Farm buildings

- Village Farmhouse and outbuildings
- Blymhill Grange and Grange Barn
- Outbuildings to High Hall Farm

Early houses or cottages

- The Old Post Office
- No.1 Rectory Cottages
- The Hollies
- No.52 Brockhurst Lane
- Grange Cottages

Individual buildings

- No. 47 Brockhurst Lane

6.5 Negative buildings

6.5.1 The Conservation Area also contains a number of unlisted buildings that make no positive contribution to its character. Some of these are identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map as 'negative buildings or sites'. This is in accordance with guidance within PPS5, which stresses the importance of dealing with such buildings through the planning process. Paragraph HE9.5 in the latter notes that:

Not all elements of a ... Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance.... Where an element does not positively contribute to its significance, local planning authorities should take into account the desirability of enhancing or better revealing the significance of the ... Conservation Area



Images from Top to Bottom

- Grange Barn, Blymhill Grange
- No.1 Rectory Cottages
- No.52 Brockhurst Lane

6.5.2 The criteria used for the selection of negative buildings or sites are derived from those set out in Appendix 2 of English Heritage's *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* (February 2006). This sets out a series of 10 questions regarding the characteristics of unlisted buildings in a conservation area. Whereas a positive answer to any one of these can provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area, by deduction, a building or site which fails to score any positive answers to the same questions can be regarded as detracting from the overall character and integrity of a conservation area and therefore to be having a negative impact upon it.

6.5.3 The negative buildings and sites identified in Blymhill are:

- Brockhurst Lane: Blymhill Village Hall, Garages to the east of No.47; 1-7 Jubilee Grove; Extensions to Village Farm, Kings Barn.

These are indicated on the Townscape Appraisal Map by cross-hatching [see Appendix 4].

6.5.4 No immediate actions or consequences are implied by the inclusion of a building or site as 'negative'. However, if at some point in the future development proposals offer an opportunity to improve or enhance such a building or site, this will be welcomed, encouraged and supported, where it is possible to do so.

6.6 Neutral buildings

6.6.1 In addition to listed, positive and negative buildings, the Conservation Area contains a large number of unlisted buildings that make neither a positive nor a negative contribution to its character – their effect is regarded as neutral.

6.6.2 These are not identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map in any special way.

6.7 Building materials & local details

6.7.1 The Black and White Cottage is the only remaining building in the Conservation Area that is clearly constructed with a timber frame. Traditionally timber-framed buildings had either wattle and daub



Images from Top to Bottom

- Blymhill Village Hall
- Garages east of No.47 Brockhurst Lane
- Jubilee Grove

or lime plaster infill panels, but Black and White Cottage has later brick infill panels. Other timber-framed structures such as No.2 Rectory Cottages have historic structures hidden within later brick casings.

6.7.2 The majority of the buildings in the Conservation Area were constructed entirely of brick. Initially roofs were of handmade clay tiles until the mid-19th century when slate began to be brought in from Wales. There are no completely stone buildings, apart from the church, as clearly the local sandstone was too soft for building purposes. However, sandstone is used for walling throughout the Conservation Area.

6.7.3 19th century red/brown brick cottages predominate and feature casement or occasionally vertical sliding sash windows. Modern brick houses generally have uPVC doors and windows.

6.7.4 Boundaries are generally well maintained and feature a mixture of sandstone walling, historic tall red brick walling, cast iron railings and hedging.



Images from Top to Bottom

- No.2 Rectory Cottages
- The Old Bake House - a typical 19th C brick cottage
- Boundary formed by a stone wall

7. Character analysis

7.1 The character of the Blymhill Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:

7.2 **Key positives:**

- Rural location and rural qualities with former farm buildings and winding narrow lanes;
- St Mary's Church, a Grade I listed building notable for its medieval tower and fine restoration in the mid 19th century;
- A number of historic buildings, most notably The Old Rectory, the School and Schoolhouse, High Hall Farm and Black and White Cottage;
- The scattered groupings of individual and pairs of small cottages and large farmhouses along Brockhurst Lane;
- Stunning views across the countryside to the north and east;
- Minimal intrusion of unsuitable modern additions to the street scene such as modern bus shelters and pavements;
- A network of winding historic routes through the settlement terminating at the church;
- Sedate volume and pace of traffic through the Conservation Area;
- Characterful outbuildings associated with the farmhouses;
- Sandstone, brick boundary walls and cast iron railings;
- The ornate iron railings outside Grove Farm;
- The ample amount of amenity space around the village hall, particularly in the paddock opposite where there is children's play equipment;
- Groups of mature trees around the church.

7.3 **Key negatives:**

- The appearance of some of the modern buildings in the Conservation Area which have no special interest, as identified in Section 6.5;
- Introduction of modern materials, such as uPVC windows in the historic buildings in the Conservation Area, notably the old schoolhouse. Such changes erode the special character through incremental change of the appearance of buildings;
- The appearance of the open space immediately around the village hall, which could benefit from enhancement;
- The lack of any facilities such as a post office or small local shop.



Images from Top to Bottom

- Blymhill affords views across the countryside
- Intrusion of modern materials - uPVC windows in the old schoolhouse
- Open space around the village hall could benefit from enhancement

8. Issues

8.1 Key issues

8.1.1 From the identification of 'Key Negatives' in the preceding chapter, the following are considered to be the principal issues in the Blymhill Conservation Area:

- Maintenance of the rural character;
- The need to carry out improvements to the village hall and the area around it;
- The use of modern materials and details on historic buildings;
- A need for full Local List assessment.

8.2 Conservation Area boundary review

8.2.1 The survey has concluded that the current designated boundary accurately reflects the special character of Blymhill.

8.3 Buffer Zones

8.3.1 The identification of a number of 'Buffer Zones' would recognise the impact that development there could have on the Conservation Area:

- Fields immediately surrounding the village from the north sweeping around to the east.

8.3.2 These are shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map [see Appendix 4].



Appendix 2: Local Plan Policies

Policies retained in The South Staffordshire Local Plan

- **Listed Buildings – Applications for Listed Building Consent: Policy BE5;**
- **Conservation Areas – Planning applications: Policy BE7;**
- **Conservation Areas – Demolition prior to redevelopment: Policy BE9;**
- **Conservation Areas – Removal of intrusive features BE12;**
- **Retention of shop fronts: Policy BE14;**
- **Replacement of shop fronts: Policy BE15;**
- **Security screens: Policy BE16;**
- **Internally illuminated signs: policy BE17;**
- **New advertisements: Policy BE18;**
- **Existing signs: Policy BE19;**
- **New development – Design criteria: Policy BE26.**

Appendix 3: Bibliography

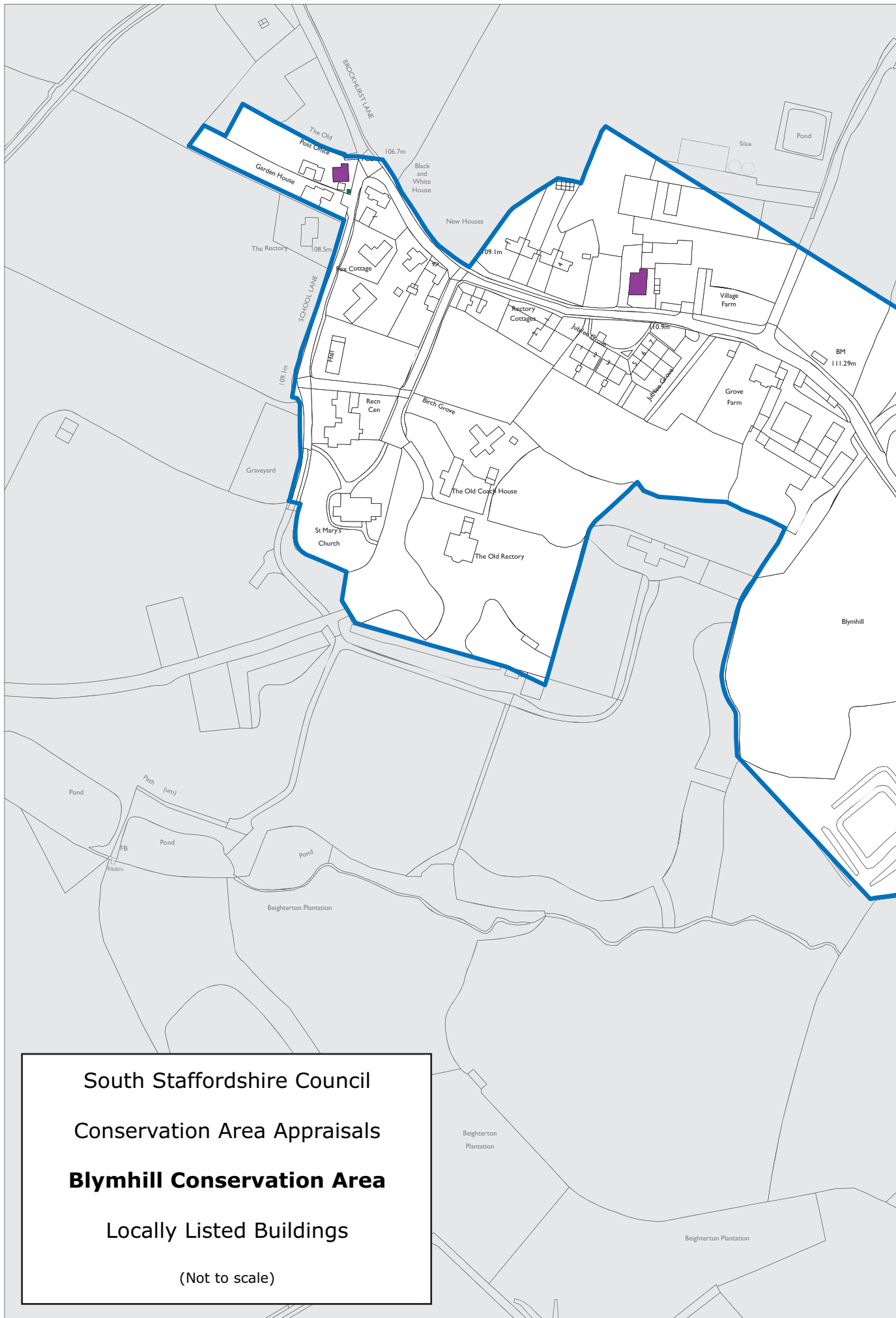
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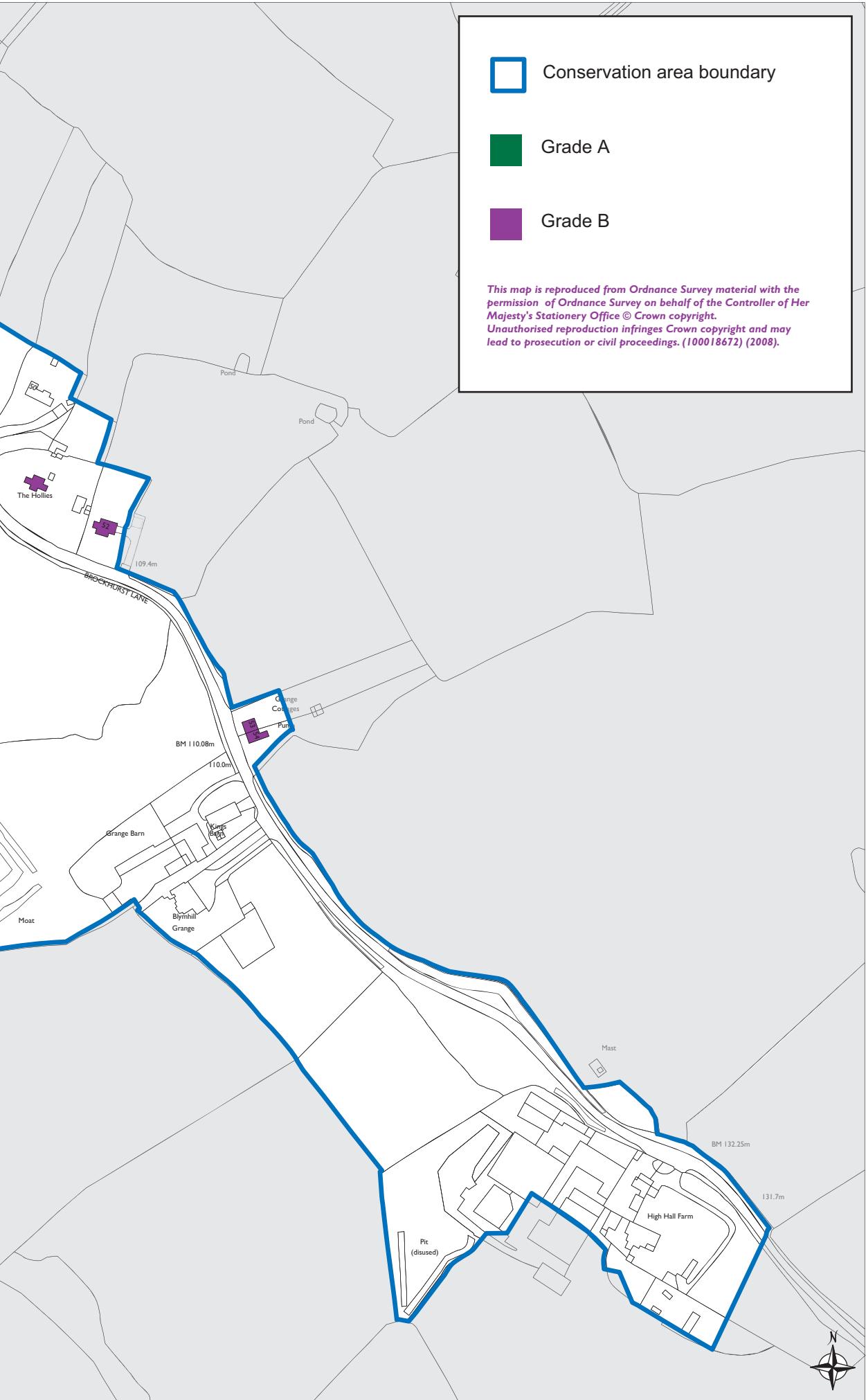
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Appendix 4: Locally Listed Buildings Map (overleaf)



South Staffordshire Council
Conservation Area Appraisals
Blymhill Conservation Area
Locally Listed Buildings
(Not to scale)



Appendix 5: Contacts

South Staffordshire Council
Council Offices
Wolverhampton Road
Codsall
Staffordshire
WV8 1PX

01902 696000
www.sstaffs.gov.uk

Conservation Team:
conservation@sstaffs.gov.uk
01902 696425

Staffordshire Historic Environment Record
Development Services Directorate
Riverway
Stafford
Staffordshire
ST16 3TJ

01785 277281
her@staffordshire.gov.uk

English Heritage
1 Waterhouse Square
138 - 142 Holborn
London
EC1N 2ST

020 7973 3000
customers@english-heritage.org.uk

English Heritage (West Midlands)
The Axis
10 Holliday Street
Birmingham B1 1TG

0121 625 6820
westmidlands@english-heritage.org.uk

Notes



**Blymhill Conservation Area Management Plan
Adopted 11 November 2010**



South Staffordshire Council