

**Lapley Conservation Areas**

**Key**

- Canal Conservation Area
- Conservation Area
- Development Boundary
- Conservation Area
- Buffer Zone (December 2013)

**NORTH**  
Scale 1:5,000

# Lapley

## 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 Lapley 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".*

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# Lapley 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 Lapley 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 Lapley 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 Wheaton Aston Village Hall on the afternoon of Tuesday 17th June 2008, at which 24 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 7th 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. Lapley 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*'. This document gives advice to shop owners and helps to guide planning decisions regarding changes to the frontages of shops.

2.2.3 These principles have also been carried forward into 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 be 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 Team of South Staffordshire Council. Within the usual period of time for consideration of a planning application, a conservation specialist from the team will advise the planning officer assigned to the application whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area concerned. 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 BVPI 205 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 Lapley Conservation Area see Section 5.4 in Appendix 1).

2.5.2 One of the common themes 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 recognised that 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. It is often the case that they can 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. Lapley 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 Lapley Conservation Area.

#### 3.1 Conservation Area boundary review

3.1.1 After the completion of a thorough survey of the Lapley Conservation Area, a character appraisal was written. This concluded that boundary revisions would be required to ensure that the designation accurately reflects the special character of Lapley.

3.1.2 **ACTION:** *The following deletions are proposed from the existing Lapley Conservation Area boundary:*

- Stretton Road east of Brierley Cottage;
- Bickford Close;
- Housing in Bickford Road north of The Vaughn Arms.

3.1.3 The recommendation to remove these sites from the Conservation Area is based on conclusions of a survey, which can be found in Section 7 of the Character Appraisal [see Appendix 1]. Most of the individual properties within the areas proposed for deletion do not have any specific architectural or historic special interest and do not make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

#### **Buffer Zones**

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

- Fields to the north of the earthworks;
- Fields to the south of the cemetery;
- Fields to the south of Park House and Parkfield Cottage;
- Fields to the north and east of Park Cottages.

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

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

3.1.7 **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 Lapley Conservation Area are well maintained and there is little scope for enhancement in many cases. The exceptions to this are:

- The Vaughn Arms
- Park House

which require some maintenance.

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

3.2.3 **ACTION:** *The Council will continue to encourage good design and the use of traditional materials through such schemes as the South Staffordshire Council Conservation and Design Awards.*

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

#### 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 Lapley Conservation Area as a buffer zone [see Section 3.1.4 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 Lapley in terms of density and scale.*

### 3.4 Amenity space

3.4.1 Lapley benefits from a large area of public open space within the Conservation Area and other smaller spaces, both public and private, that contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is important that the high standards to which these areas are maintained are upheld in the future.

3.4.2 **ACTION:** *The Council will continue to work with other agencies such as Lapley 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 Lapley Conservation Area, important trees and green spaces are indicated on the Townscape Appraisal Map (see pp. 20-21); 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 Lapley's historic buildings are included on the statutory list, some others may benefit from this protection. It is possible that the site of the Benedictine Priory could be designated as a Scheduled Monument and the K6 telephone kiosk could be considered for Grade II listing. 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 Within this, Section 6.3.3 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 4.

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].*

3.7.5 **ACTION:** *The Council will consider supporting any application to have the Priory site and the K6 telephone kiosk considered for further legal protection from development.*

### **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 Lapley 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 the furniture on the village green.

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 Lapley 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: Lapley Conservation Area appraisal

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# 1. Summary

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

- A quiet historic rural village spread around the Parish Church along winding lanes that surround a large village green at the centre;
- An unusually well preserved example of an historic medieval village core;
- A rich stock of historic buildings and other structures, with 18 listed examples in the Conservation Area, including an early medieval church, 16th century timber framed houses, large 17th, 18th and 19th century red brick houses, outbuildings and barns, entrance gates, boundary walls and churchyard memorials;
- Large historic and modern buildings, generally set in generous plots indicate its identity as the desirable location of the lord of the manor's residence, compared to the neighbouring village of Wheaton Aston, which has traditionally housed the larger part of the parish's population and the majority of community services;
- A topography that gives extensive views over the neighbouring fields and meadows, which reinforce the rural character and afford breathtaking views;
- The abundance of trees and hedging enhance the rural setting;
- Historic boundaries including sandstone walling, tall and low red brick walling, ornate cast iron railings and gate, and plain hooped railings around the village green;
- Some modern development to the east and north, but generally contained within the historic boundaries of the village, leading to a retained sense of the historic limits of the settlement;
- Important early historic development in the form of earthworks linked with the 12th century Benedictine Priory that was located to the north of the Parish Church;
- Focal points provided by the medieval Parish Church (grade I listed), the village green and The Vaughn Arms, which act as the hubs of commercial and social activity, and;
- A strong use of red in the buildings and boundary walls, which gives a rich rusty look to them; the sandstone Parish Church, the red brick elevations of secular buildings and the sandstone walls.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 The Lapley Conservation Area

2.1.1 South Staffordshire District Council designated the Lapley Conservation Area on 6th September 1977. The Conservation Area covers the historic core of Lapley around the Parish Church, stretching mainly northwards along Church Lane and eastwards along Park Lane and includes the historic buildings and the open spaces at the centre of the village.

2.1.2 Lapley is a rural village, which has retained its sleepy appearance through the lack of intrusive modern development at its centre and the limited construction of modern houses on the roads leading out of the settlement. The extensive amount of Green Belt land, including parts of the neighbouring Stretton Hall Estate, between Lapley and the surrounding settlements has enhanced its rural characteristics. The absence of any commercial hub in the village is indicative of the quiet pace of life that generally characterises it.

2.1.3 The village developed in the service of the Benedictine Priory from around 1100 AD and by the 17th century the lord of the manor became established in Lapley Hall. Other large houses were built, first Lapley House and then Park House further east, with farm buildings and cottages sprinkled between them.

2.1.4 In the 21st century many of the village lanes retain their historic layout and rural charm, although the north side of Park Lane is now packed fairly tightly with large modern houses. Also, modern detached houses have been built to the north of The Vaughn Arms in Bickford Close and to the south of Lapley House in Stretton Road. The village has many trees in key groups and these, along with the winding lanes, the open spaces between buildings and the extensive views over the surrounding countryside, have helped retain Lapley's strong rural character.

### 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 *Planning Policy Statement No.5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5). 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 Lapley 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 Lapley 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 this document 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 pp.20-21). 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 Lapley 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 22 confirms that the following policies apply to the Lapley Conservation Area or to the land that surrounds it:

- Conservation Area Policies: BE7, 9, 12, 14-19;
- Green Belt: Policies GB1, C1-4, 8 & 13;
- Public Open Space Proposals Site 2 (Policy R6).

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](mailto:developmentplans@sstaffs.gov.uk).

## 3. Location & landscape setting

### 3.1 Location & activities

3.1.1 Lapley is located to the north of Wolverhampton, about four miles to the west of Penkridge and three miles north of Brewood, and is surrounded by other rural Staffordshire villages and hamlets including Stretton, Wheaton Aston, Mitton and Whiston.

3.1.2 The village is in a rural setting and most of the houses in the settlement are clustered along a small triangle of roads that join around a large village green and radiate to the other small outlying rural settlements. No major trunk roads run through or around the village and Watling Street (A5) is located about two miles to the south. The location close to the industrialised West Midlands has not impinged greatly on the village due its distance from the modern transport infrastructure and the historic canal and railway routes.

3.1.3 Activities in the village are limited as there are no shops in the settlement and The Vaughn Arms, on the corner of Bickford Road, is closed. All the other buildings are residential and, with the parish hall based in neighbouring Wheaton Aston, activity during the weekdays is limited. However, the church continues to hold regular services and there is an active bell-ringing group, both of which bring sporadic activity to the village. Furthermore, the village green provides an important public amenity space and is used for occasional community events, historically Morris dancing and cricket matches.

### 3.2 Topography & geology

3.2.1 Lapley stands on a low hill with the Parish Church standing on slightly raised ground to the west of the village. Although the ground in the Conservation Area is mainly level, it descends slightly from the church towards the Vaughn Arms in the north and the ground has been cut away at the site of the earthworks next to the church. The elevated position of the village leads to extensive views over the hilly countryside in most directions, although the vistas are also due to the lack of modern development around the village itself.

3.2.2 The village and the surrounding countryside have a mixture of soils, including light and mixed loams and clay. Historically, marl pits in each field



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Lapley in its rural setting
- The former Vaughn Arms, Lapley
- Lapley's elevated position affords extensive views of the surrounding countryside

provided richer soil to be spread over the fields and enable them to produce wheat crops year after year and made the area eminently suitable for farming. The soft sandstone rock that is also found in the wider area is used in the distinctive boundary walls, notably around the Parish Church.

3.2.3 The church itself was constructed of sandstone and, therefore, its use as a building material can be traced back for almost 1,000 years. The clay in the soil led to the creation of clay pits around the village, all of which are now disused, but which will have provided the material for the rich red brick used in construction since the 17th century.

### 3.3 Relationship of the Conservation Area to its surroundings

3.3.1 Fields and pastures encircle the Lapley Conservation Area. Almost all of the buildings in the village are currently included in the Conservation Area and there is a clear gateway into the village in each direction, at which point the built form gives way to the surrounding countryside. To the north there are views through to the fields beyond the post-war houses of Queens Cottages. To the east there are views over the low hedge and along the narrow track at the end of Park Lane to rolling countryside. To the south the bungalows of Stretton Road give way to a high-hedged lane that leads down to the Roman road of Lapley Lane. To the west the sharply deviating country lane leads past the church, earthworks and cemetery through hedge lined fields.

3.3.2 Further afield small hamlets and the large village of Wheaton Aston lie scattered across the Staffordshire countryside. The intrusion of modern infrastructure on this rural scene is minimal and the closest major routes are the Shropshire Union Canal to the west, Watling Street to the south and the A449 to the east, none of which have any affect on the Conservation Area.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- A view out into open countryside across the churchyard to the Church of All Saints, Lapley
- Rich red bricks made from local clays were used for building from the 17th century
- Earthworks are a feature of the landscape around Lapley

## 4. Historic development & archaeology

### 4.1 Historic development

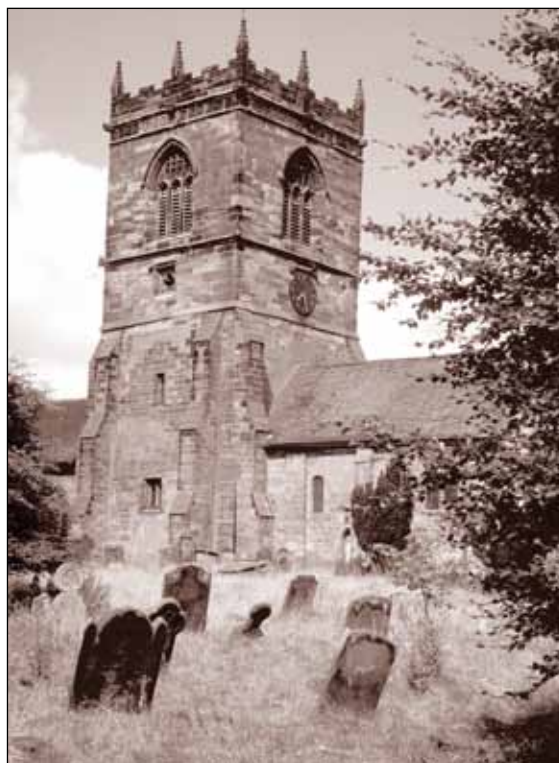
4.1.1 The Earls of Mercia held Lapley until 1061 when it was given to a Priory of Black Monks from the Benedictine Abbey of St Remigus at Rhiems. The name Lapley most probably derives from the Anglo Saxon 'Laeppa Leah' meaning 'woodland clearing'.

4.1.2 By 1086 the manor of Lapley was recorded in the Domesday Book as 'Lepelie' and contained ploughland, meadows and woodland, but no church. The priory and church were built soon afterwards on the current site of the Parish Church of All Saints and to its immediate north. The church contains Saxo-Norman structure in the form of a 12th century chancel and nave, as well as 13th and 15th century additions.

4.1.3 The earthworks to the north of the church may, in part, include some evidence of pre-Roman occupation, but principally feature the remnants of the moat and embankment that once surrounded the priory. The priory and lands were seized by King John, but were recovered by the Prior in 1205 and the village continued to grow throughout the 13th century, presumably on the existing road layout. Additions made to the church at this time indicate the relative wealth of the Prior, who was known as the Lord of Lapley by 1274. A weekly market and annual fair were granted to the Abbey in 1292, although these were held in the neighbouring village of Wheaton Aston.

4.1.4 As Lapley moved into the late Middle Ages the Crown took control over the tenant farmers from the absent Prior until the suppression of alien priories in 1415, when Lapley was given to the collegiate church of Tong in Shropshire. The manor and lordship stayed under the ownership of the college until 1546 when during the Dissolution it passed into secular hands. By this time, the current Old Manor House replaced part of the old priory buildings, although some additional early structures may have remained further to the north. At a similar time Lapley Court was built as a farmhouse, set back from the corner of Bickford Road and Park Lane.

4.1.5 The remains of the priory were fortified during the English Civil War and Lapley Hall (then



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- John Speed's map of Lapley, 1610
- The Church of All Saints, Lapley, depicted in an 18th century engraving
- The Church of All Saints, Lapley

Lapley House), the functioning manor house, was the headquarters for a Royalist garrison of 70 men. It was a large house of 14 hearths by 1666 and Lapley was recorded as having 13 households by this time, compared with 53 in Wheaton Aston.

4.1.6 The good quality churchyard monuments in the churchyard are testament to the prominent families that lived in Lapley during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Lapley Court was converted into a domestic dwelling in the 17th century and other large houses were built in the 18th and 19th centuries. These include Lapley House and Park House, and Lapley Hall was considerably extended in the 19th century and a number of fine red brick farm buildings were built in its grounds. Other additions to the village in the 19th century include a fine vicarage, an inn, and a number of red brick cottages. All of this development took place around the village green, and the open space was preserved for the use of the village.

4.1.7 In the 18th and 19th century, Lapley and Wheaton Aston continued to rely on each other for necessary services. While Lapley had the parish church, a school was built in Wheaton Aston in the 18th century, attended by 12 children of the parish in 1818, and served the area into the 20th century.

4.1.8 By 1855 All Saints' Church had fallen into disrepair and rebuilding of the tower took place. The village did not grow in the manner of many other villages in South Staffordshire in the 19th century, largely due to its distance from the canal and railway network. Trade directories from this time show that village tradesman were active in Lapley and included shoemakers, a wheelwright, a miller and innkeeper, as well as farmers. Other crafts were also underway in the village; such as beekeeping - evident in the grade II listed 19th century bee bole walls to the south of Lapley Hall.

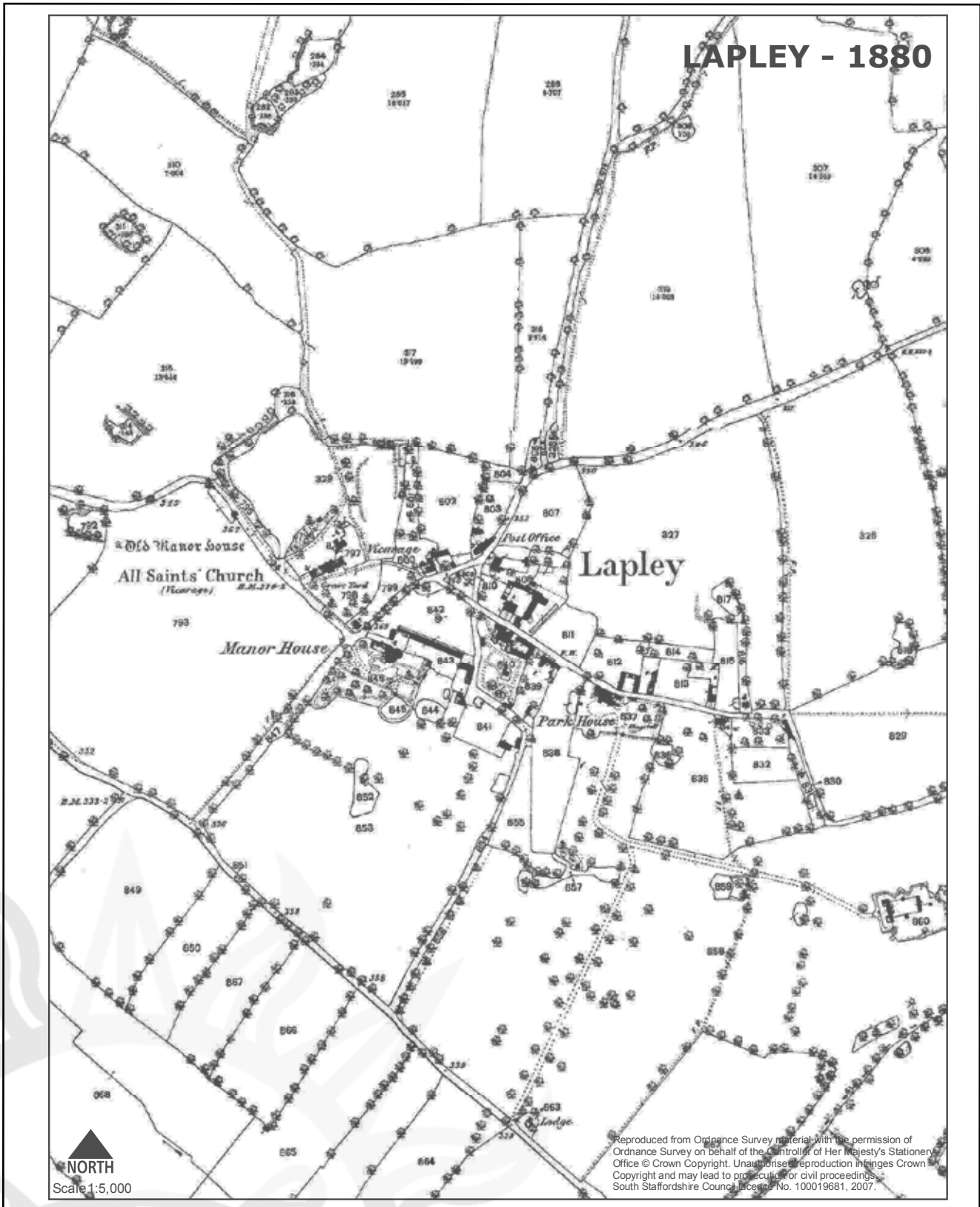
4.1.8 The 1880 Ordnance Survey map shows all of the key historic buildings in Lapley, and Nos.1 and 2 Bickford Road are marked as a post office. The distinct triangular layout of the roads around the village green is clearly shown, as are the farm buildings in typical arrangements.

4.1.9 The 1901 map shows that very little of the built form changed in Lapley over the next 20 years



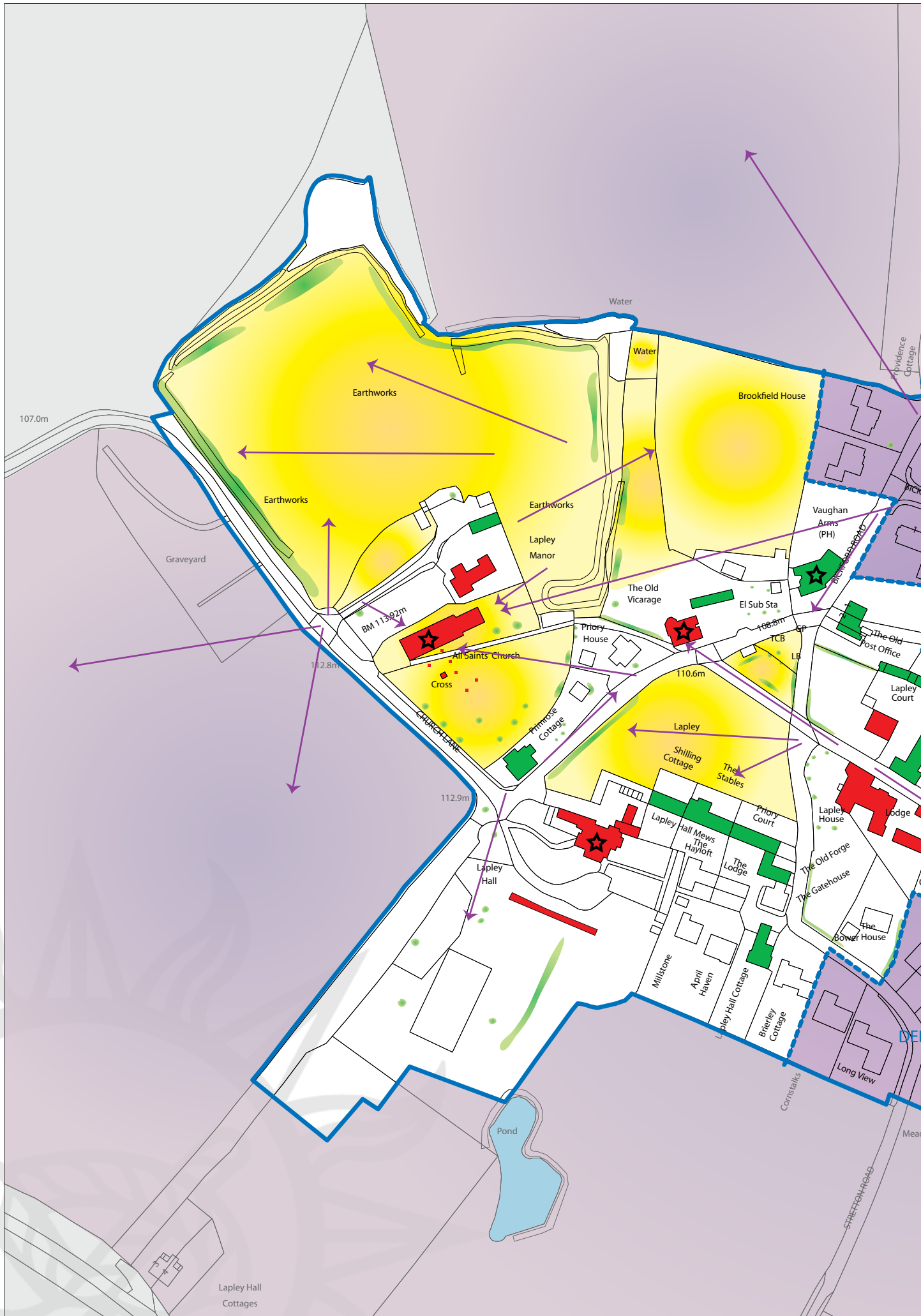
### Images from Top to Bottom

- Lapley Hall
- Lapley Court
- Park House, Lapley
- The Old Vicarage, Lapley



**Image**










- Lapley - Ordnance Survey Map 1880



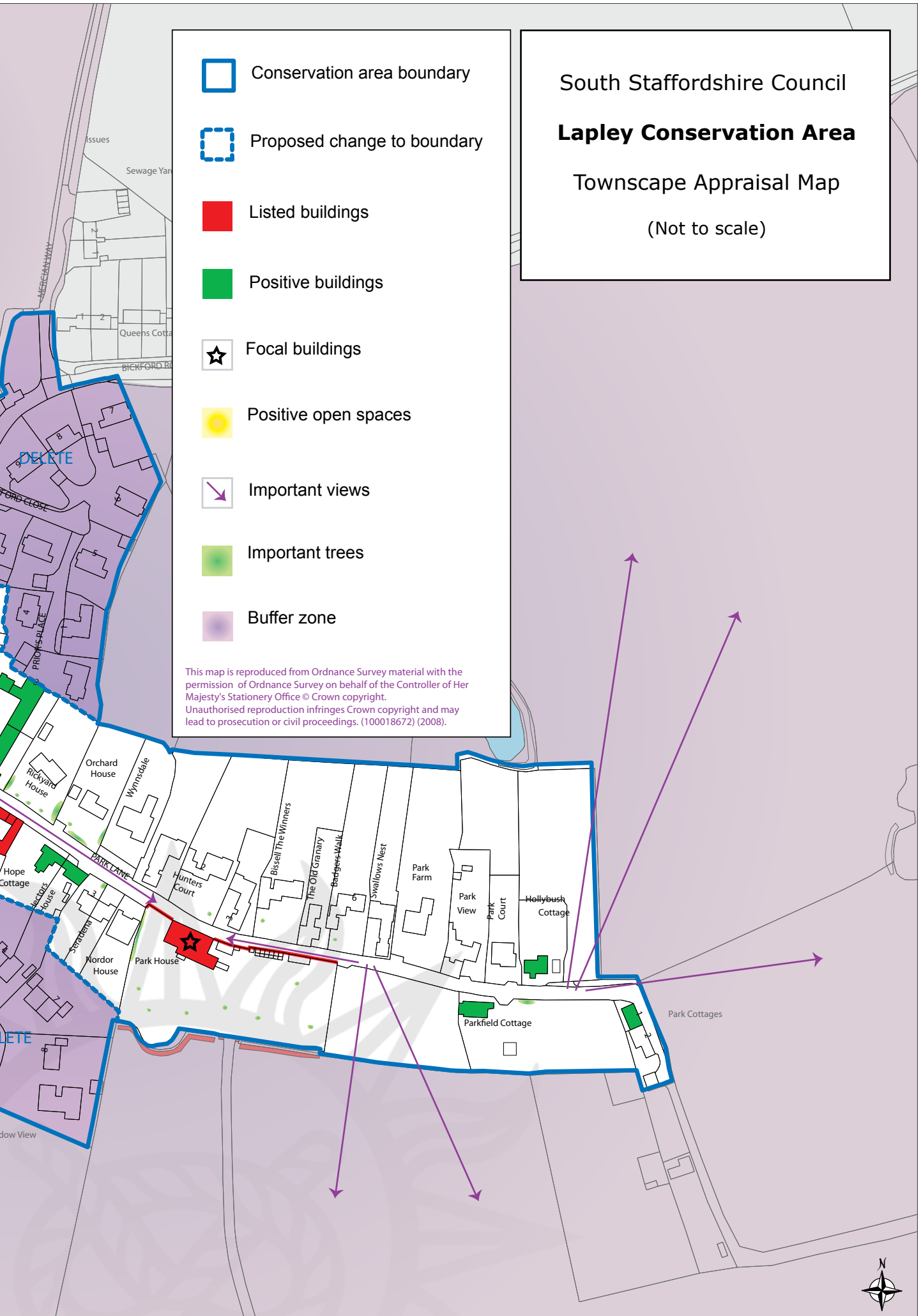
South Staffordshire Council  
**Lapley Conservation Area**

Townscape Appraisal Map

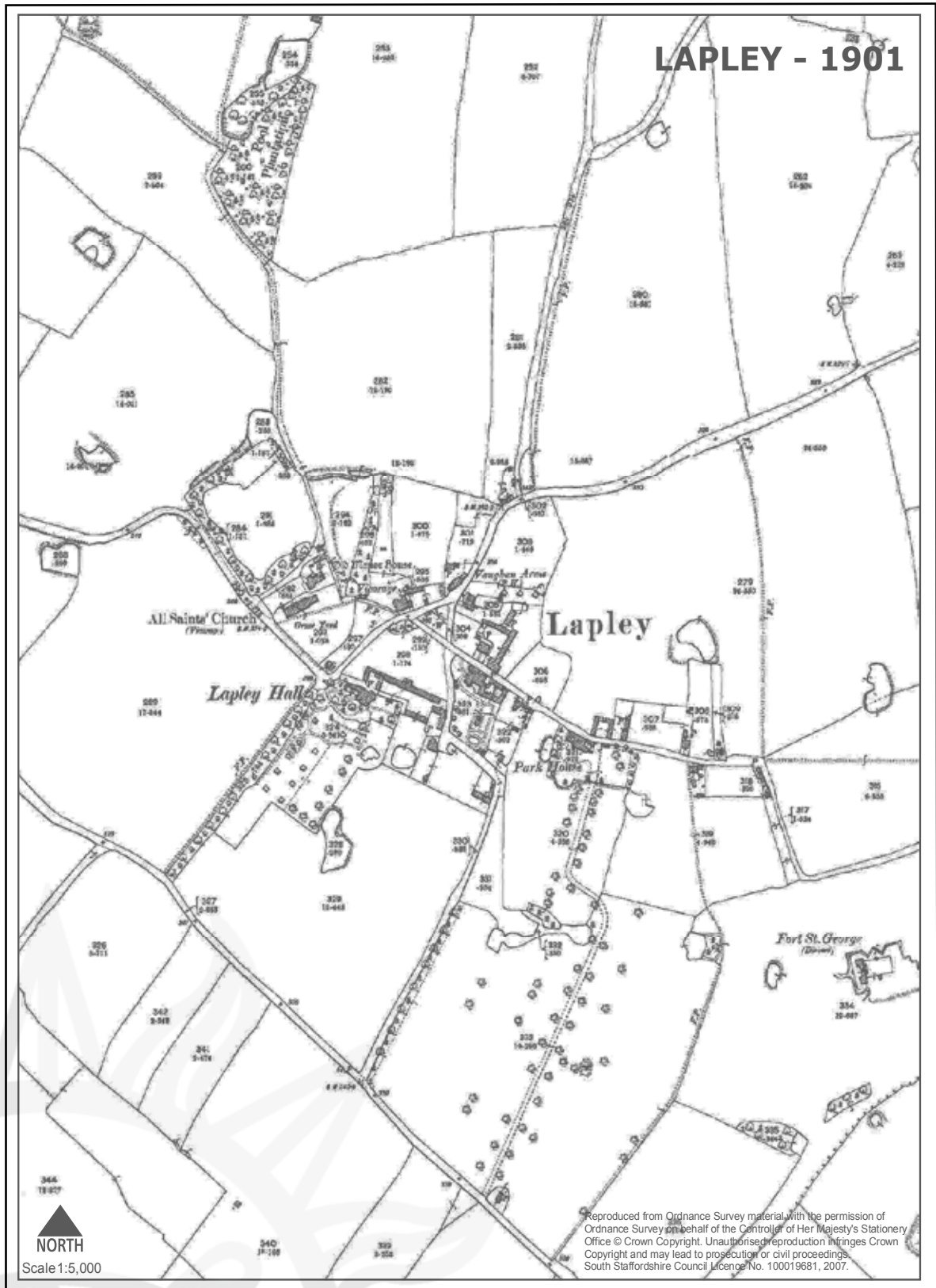
(Not to scale)

-  Conservation area boundary
-  Proposed change to boundary
-  Listed buildings
-  Positive buildings
-  Focal buildings
-  Positive open spaces
-  Important views
-  Important trees
-  Buffer zone

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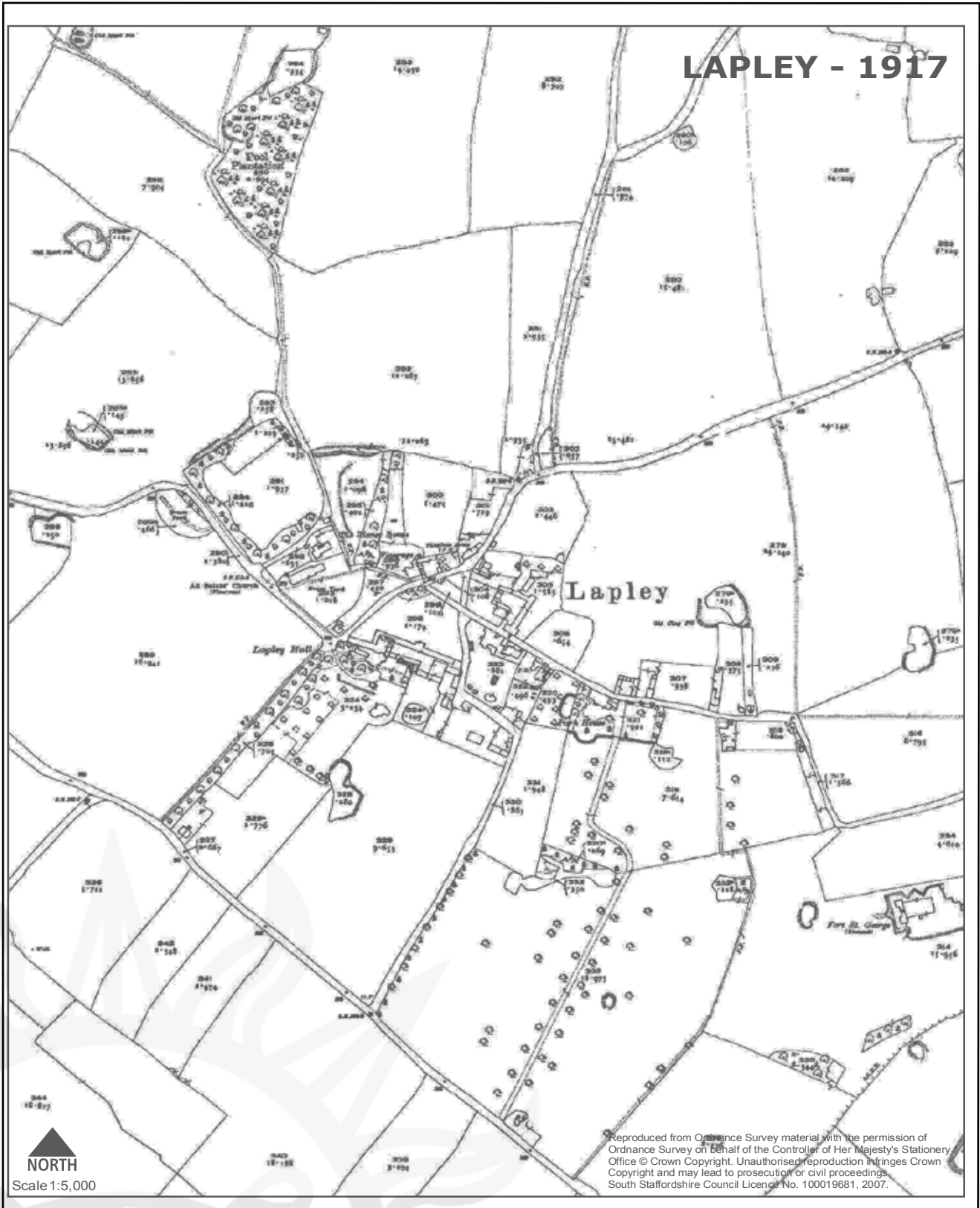






**Image**

- Lapley - Ordnance Survey Map 1901



**Image**

- Lapley - Ordnance Survey Map 1917

and the considerable open spaces between properties remain. The only additional building appears to be a cottage and outhouse to the north of the Old Manor House. One noticeable change in the features is a reduction in the amount of trees, particularly along Park Lane and along the field boundaries surrounding the village.

4.1.10 There is little new development by 1917 either. The only new buildings appear to be a house to the south of Lapley House on Stretton Road and a few additional farm buildings behind the barns of Lapley Court.

4.1.11 The village remained relatively unchanged throughout the 20th century until new houses were built in the post-war period. Firstly, council houses were built on the northern edge of the village, and then the 1960s saw the construction of detached houses on the north side of Park Lane, followed by some bungalow developments on Stretton Road. At the end of the 20th century the additional gaps along the north side of Park Road were infilled with large brick houses along with the courtyard behind Lapley Hall. Furthermore, a cul-de-sac with detached houses was constructed opposite The Vaughn Arms in Bickford Close and a new house and garages erected between the church and the vicarage. Despite these developments, the 21st century village has retained much of its rural appearance.

## 4.2 Archaeology

4.2.1 There are 26 records on Staffordshire County Historic Environment Record for Lapley and its immediate surroundings. These include a Roman road, the earthwork remains of the precinct of the 11th century Benedictine Priory, ridge and furrow field patterns, descriptions of the listed buildings, medieval finds, a former Victorian munitions store and the landscape park around Lapley Hall.

4.2.2 The large earthworks lie to the north of the Parish Church and form a former moat and embankment around the former Benedictine Priory. The priory buildings, which once stood on the site of the Old Manor House and the



neighbouring cottages, were fortified by the Royalist garrison stationed at Lapley Hall in the 17th century and the earthworks may have been modified during this time, however, it is still surprising that the area is not designated as a Scheduled Monument. The earthworks may contain significant archaeological remains.

### Images from Top to Bottom

- Lapley from Bickford Road with newer houses on the left, opposite The Vaughn Arms
- The Vaughn Arms

## 5. Spatial analysis

### 5.1 Plan, form & layout

5.1.1 The historic layout of Lapley is centred on the village green and the Parish Church. The northern tip of the green has been separated from the rest of the open space by a road that has connected the end of Park Lane to Church Lane since at least the 1830s and the small triangular tip is ringed by mature trees and shrubs.

5.1.2 Buildings line the three sides of the green: Lapley Hall Farm to the south, Lapley House and Lapley Court to the east and the Old Vicarage, a modern house and Primrose Cottage to the north. To the north, The Vaughn Arms stands at the junction of Stretton Road and Church Lane, as they become Bickford Road and wind northwards out of the village.

5.1.3 Park Lane has a contrasting appearance to the other roads in the Conservation Area. It is long and fairly straight, leading in an easterly direction from the green with continuous built form on either side, often set behind grass verges. The streetscape opens out around Parkfield Cottage and the road becomes enveloped in an agricultural setting.

5.1.4 To the south, Stretton Road deviates sharply to the east at the former gatehouse to Lapley Hall and then twists out of the village. Like Park Lane, some modern development extends along this road on former open land.

5.1.5 Church Lane also turns sharply as it leads northwards from the village green. This leads northwest alongside the church, past the main entrance to Lapley Hall. Primrose Cottage provides a strong visual anchor point as the road turns this corner before the streetscape gives way to extensive views over the surrounding countryside. North of Church Lane, which winds westerly out of the settlement, stands the traditional grouping of a parish church and manor house set back from the road behind a large churchyard and gardens at the core of the oldest part of this historic settlement, around which the rest of the village was laid out.

5.1.6 Other features of the layout of the Conservation Area include the footpath from Church Lane to the church, passing The Old Vicarage and through the churchyard into the fields containing



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Lapley village green, ringed by trees; surrounded and dissected by roads
- The Old Vicarage (right) and the Church of All Saints
- Park Lane (right) seen from beyond the village green

the earthworks to the north and west of the church. In these fields the layout has been eroded by the passage of time, but evidence of an embankment remains and along the northern boundary of the Conservation Area the course of a brook is still traceable.

## 5.2 Landmarks, focal points & views

5.2.1 The landmark buildings, as identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map (see pp. 20-21), provide focal points within the Conservation Area through their position as individual or corner buildings and their striking architecture. These are the parish church, Lapley Hall, The Old Vicarage, The Vaughn Arms and Park House. Other important historic buildings, such as Lapley House and Lapley Court are not marked as landmark buildings because of their position set back from the road, sometimes behind heavy tree cover.

5.2.2 The Parish Church of All Saints is the most important landmark in Lapley, sitting at the highest point in the village overlooking the surrounding countryside to the north, south and west. The church is visible from most vantage points in the Conservation Area although the large mature trees in the churchyard obscure sightlines from some directions, such as the car park to The Vaughn Arms. A 16th century manor house still stands in the shadow of the sandstone church and this is an unusually well preserved example of an historic medieval village core. The view of the church on the approach from Wheaton Aston along the winding Church Lane is especially worthy of note.

5.2.3 Lapley Hall was the 17th century replacement for the old manor house and along with Lapley Hall Farm dominates the southern end of the village green. Large lavish red brick chimneystacks and farm buildings, which were among the 19th century additions to the building and its setting, reinforce its impact as a landmark building. On entering the village from the west, Church Lane leads up to the attractive white painted timber entranceway entrance to Lapley Hall before turning sharply northwards. The large red brick building framed by a white picket fence and mature trees makes an interesting counterpoint to the modest Primrose Cottage on the opposite corner and they both form a gateway to the centre of the village.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Old Vicarage
- The Church of All Saints, Lapley
- Lapley Hall

5.2.4 Further along Church Lane, The Old Vicarage stands quite a distance from the parish church, but prominently positioned on a slight bend on the road and this handsome three storey red brick building faces eastwards towards Park Lane.

5.2.5 The Vaughn Arms stands at the northern gateway to the historic village edge and its white painted brick façade (in need of some maintenance at the time of survey) creates a distinctive termination to the northern tip of the village green. Although the building has extensions of no particular interest along the edge of Bickford Road, the inn provides an important social focal point for the community as well as fitting in visually to this rural village scene.

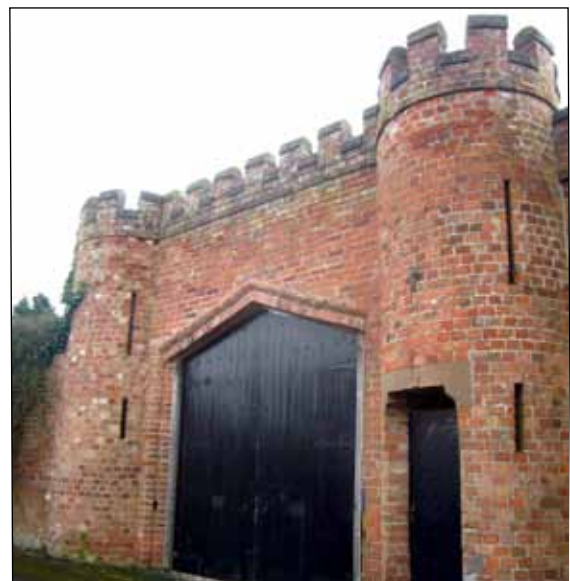
5.2.6 Halfway along Park Lane, the striking castellated features of Park House make an immense impact on the street scene and the turrets and towers dominate the vistas along the road. This 19th century building has the appearance of a fortress and a mixture of treatments including pebbledash and red brick. Its position on the edge of the road and its large scale give it a very domineering presence on the lane and it makes an emphatic architectural statement compared to the modern housing that stands to the north and west of it.

5.2.7 The parts of the Conservation Area outside the immediate environs of the village green are not characterised by landmark buildings or individual focal points, but instead it is notable for the views across the open spaces, particularly from the ends of Park Lane and Stretton Road and northwards from the earthworks and between some of the modern houses.

5.2.8 There are many other important views across the surrounding countryside from key locations, which are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map [see pp. 20-21].

### 5.3 Open spaces, trees & landscape

5.3.1 The Conservation Area is notable for the gaps in the built form, except along the north side of Park Lane where modern development of fairly considerable massing is almost continuous. However, the most significant open spaces in Lapley are the village green, the generous grounds of some



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Vaughn Arms
- Park House, Park Lane
- The castellated entrance to Park House

of the large houses and the wide blanket of open countryside that encircles the village. The principal open space is the village green which is triangular and partially lined by mature trees. Cast iron hooped railings surround the larger portion of the green and grass covers the uneven ground. The smaller section to the north is more heavily covered in trees and features benches, signposts, a post box and a telephone kiosk, as well as the remaining walling of an earlier structure. Low timber posts connected by a linked chain line the smaller green space.

5.3.2 While the village green is the principal open space in the Conservation Area, there are other open areas some of which are accessible to the public, and provide important spaces between buildings that engender the rural appearance of the Conservation Area. From north to south they are:

- The earthworks to the east and north of Lapley Manor House;
- The garden of Lapley Court
- The land around Parkfield Cottage
- The churchyard;
- The grounds to Lapley Hall.

5.3.3 The open areas around the church and Lapley Manor have a rural appearance conferred by groups of mature trees, sandstone walling and winding country lanes. Those spaces within the curtilage of private houses, while still rural, are more carefully managed and have a domestic appearance.

5.3.4 Trees make an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and mature specimens line the village green and the grounds of the larger houses. There are also mature specimens in the churchyard, the garden of The Old Vicarage and lining the brooks that form the northern boundary of the Conservation Area. A distinctive grouping of non-native species lines the entrance to Bickford Road opposite The Vaughn Arms and creates a green corridor at this village entrance.

## 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.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Distinctive railings around the village green
- Open area around the church
- Lapley's trees contribute greatly to the character of the Conservation Area

#### 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 in Bickford Close covered in tarmac and with concrete kerbs.

All the roadways are covered in black tarmac, although narrow strips of grass verge, often with bulbs and other planting, line some of them. The verge along the south side of Stretton Road is formalised with concrete kerbing and concrete block vehicle crossover into Brierley Cottage extends onto the road to form a very small section of pavement. The footpath alongside The Old Vicarage is also tarmac.

#### 5.4.3 **Street lighting**

Streetlights are positioned sparingly in Lapley and most of them are 1960s 'hockey-stick' style steel lamp-standards located on the outskirts of the village outside the modern houses in Stretton Road and Bickford Road.

At other locations, such as outside Lapley Hall on the corner of Church Lane and on Park Lane, there are rural style street lamps fixed to telegraph poles. Further west along Church Lane there are some Victorian lantern style streetlights with black painted steel standards.

#### 5.4.4 **Street signs**

The street signs in the Conservation Area are modern and fixed to the pavement on steel supports.

The most distinctive directional sign in the Conservation Area is the black and white painted timber finger post on the corner of Church Lane and Stretton Road opposite The Vaughn Arms, which directs traffic to a variety of neighbouring villages. Additional signage includes the modern Public Bridleway sign at the entrance to The Old Manor House driveway and a timber Staffs Way signpost to the north of the church.

Highway signage is limited to the sharp turn signs on Church Lane and national speed limit signs on the edge of the village.



#### **Images from Top to Bottom**

- Very few of the Conservation Area's roads have pavements
- Some of Lapley's streetlights are fixed to telegraph poles
- The most distinctive directional sign in the Lapley Conservation Area



#### 5.4.5 *Other features*

- A concrete drinking trough lies on the eastern side of the village green.
- Freestanding local notice boards, a K6 telephone kiosk, a small post box fixed to a pole stand on the northern corner of the village green. A timber and metal freestanding litter bin stands next to the telephone kiosk. Set further back on the green are some wooden benches.
- Another freestanding timber notice board stands in the churchyard by the gate to the south door.
- Telegraph poles and overhead wires impinge on the rural setting of the Conservation Area. Their presence is most noticeable on the west side of the village green.
- There is a blue litter bin attached to a highway sign pole outside the church, and is of a standard design found across the South Staffordshire District.



#### **Images from Top to Bottom**

- Old drinking trough on the east side of the village green
- K6 telephone kiosk and postbox on the village green
- Blue litter bin outside the church

## 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 and three storey detached houses, former farmhouses with outbuildings and three large houses including a 17th century manor house and a church. Modern residential houses are interspersed between the historic buildings, but mainly found on Park Lane, Stretton Road and Bickford Road.

6.1.2 Other building types include a place of worship (the Parish Church of All Saints), a vicarage and an inn.

### 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 18 listed buildings or structures in the Conservation Area; all listed Grade II, apart from:

- The Church of All Saints' Church (listed Grade I) of 12th, 13th and 15th century origins with 19th century additions. The Churchyard also contains the following monuments and memorials, all listed Grade II:
  - Churchyard Cross, 10 metres south of the nave
  - Headstone, 3 metres north of the Churchyard Cross
  - Herbert Memorial, 2 metres west of the Churchyard Cross
  - Clarke Memorial, 1 metre east of the Churchyard Cross
  - Farmer Memorial, 2 metres north east of the Clarke Memorial
  - Heally Memorial, 1 metre south of the tower
  - Webb Memorial, 10 metres south of the tower



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Two- and three-storey houses are typical of Lapley's historic buildings
- The Church of All Saints, Lapley
- Modern housing on Bickford Lane

6.2.3 The other Grade II listed buildings in the Lapley Conservation Area are:

- Lapley Manor – a 16th century timber framed manor house with brick infill and a handmade tile roof;
- Lapley Hall – a 17th century house with alterations of 1875 and extensive farm buildings; separately listed Grade II are:
  - a wall and bee bole wall south of Lapley Hall
- Lapley House and Lapley Lodge – a subdivided red brick house of the late 18th and early 19th century. Lapley House has a particularly fine frontage featuring tripartite arch headed windows facing out over the village green;
- Lapley Court – a 16th century timber framed farmhouse which was altered in the 17th century and later, and is in the process of having some applied timbering removed and general works are being carried out across its three ranges;
- Park House – a mainly mid 19th century house that may contain earlier structure. A crenelated parapet hides a flat roof and the mock castle is rectangular in form; separately listed Grade II are:
  - the entrance gate lodges to the south of Park House
  - the garden wall either side of the gate lodges
  - the walls flanking the north side of Park House including the gateway and towers;
- The Old Vicarage – a late 18th century house that features fine details such as sash windows, a six-panelled door and a saw tooth eaves cornice. The symmetry of the design is slightly marred by a 19th century ground floor bay that extends to the left of the front door.



## 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.

### Images from Top to Bottom

- Lapley Court, Park Lane
- Park House, Park Lane
- Lapley House

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.

**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 Lapley are being proposed for inclusion on the Local List:

**Grade A**

- K6 design telephone kiosk on the northern corner of the village green.
- Park Lane: Park View.

**Grade B**

- Bickford Road: The Vaughn Arms Public House, Nos. 1 and 2 (The Old Post Office);
- Park Lane: Hope Cottage, Hector's House, Parkfield Cottage.

**Grade C**

- Church Lane: Cottage to the north of Lapley Manor.

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'



**Images from Top to Bottom**

- Park View under restoration in 2008, works now completed
- The Vaughn Arms from Bickford Lane
- Hector's House, Park Lane

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 (see pp. 20-21).

## 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 (see pp. 20-21) as 'positive buildings' and in many cases they are also proposed for inclusion on the Local List. This follows advice provided in English Heritage's *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 impossible, they are excluded.

6.4.3 The positive buildings are:

### **Public Houses:**

- The Vaughn Arms.

### **Former farmhouses & industrial buildings:**

- Shilling Cottage, The Stables, Priory Court, The Old Forge, house north of Lapley Manor, The Old Vicarage outbuildings, Lapley Court barns.

### **Early houses or cottages:**

- Lapley Hall Cottage
- Primrose Cottage

### **Individual buildings:**

- The Old Post Office (No.1 and 2 Bickford Road)
- Park Lane: Hope Cottage/Hector's House, Hollybush Cottage, No.1 Park Cottages, Parkfield Cottage, Park View
- K6 telephone kiosk



## Images from Top to Bottom

- The Old Forge
- The Old Post Office - Nos. 1 & 2 Bickford Lane
- Parkfield Cottage, Park Lane

## 6.5 Neutral buildings

6.5.1 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.

6.5.2 These are not identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map (see pp. 20-21) in any special way.

## 6.6 Building materials & local details

6.6.1 There are two buildings in the Conservation Area that are clearly constructed using timber frame methods. Traditionally timber framed buildings had either wattle and daub or lime plaster infill panels, and Lapley Manor and Lapley Court retain some of these materials although they have also received some brick replacements, rendered and other modifications made to their structures. There may also be the vestigial remains of some timber-framed structure secreted within other buildings too, notably Lapley Hall.

6.6.2 The majority of the buildings in the conservation 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.

6.6.3 19th century red/brown brick houses predominate and feature casement or vertical sliding sash windows. Modern brick houses generally have modern uPVC doors and windows.

6.6.4 Boundaries are generally very well maintained and feature a mixture of sandstone walling, historic tall red brick walling, wrought iron hooped railings and some modern red brick walling.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Lapley Court - one of the village's traditional timber-framed buildings
- Lapley Lodge - a three-storey red brick house
- Wrought iron railings and brick walls are two commonly seen boundary materials in Lapley

# 7. Character analysis

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

7.2 **Key positives:**

- Hilltop location with views over the surrounding countryside;
- Rural qualities with former farm buildings, winding narrow lanes, a large village green and few buildings;
- Open fields on the perimeter;
- All Saints' Church, a grade I listed building and a fine example of 12th century craftsmanship;
- Pretty graveyard with attractive sandstone walling and monuments;
- Site of the former Benedictine Priory featuring earthworks;
- A number of historic buildings, most notably Lapley Manor House and Lapley Hall;
- The sometimes-quirky features of the historic buildings: the fortress like appearance of Park House and its castellated corner towers. Also, the flamboyant round headed tripartite windows of Lapley House and the soaring chimneystacks of Lapley Hall;
- The spacious grounds of the large houses give added openness and rural qualities to the Conservation Area;
- Minimal intrusion of unsuitable modern additions to the street scene such as modern bus shelters and pavements;
- Minimal introduction of modern materials, such as uPVC windows in the historic buildings in the Conservation Area, which could otherwise erode the special character through incremental change of the appearance of buildings;
- A network of winding historic routes through the settlement terminating at the village green;
- Sedate volume and pace of traffic through the Conservation Area;
- 19th century public house enclosing the crossroads at the north end of the village green;
- Characterful small outbuildings associated with the vicarage, manor houses and farmhouses;
- Sandstone, brick boundary walls, white picket fences and cast iron railings;
- The ornate cast iron railings on top on a low red and blue brick wall of Lapley Lodge that run along Park Lane;



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Park House, Park Lane
- Winding historic routes through Lapley
- Outbuildings formerly associated with larger houses - now converted

- The sturdy cast iron gate posts set into the railings around the village green;
- Two stone markers, possibly former milestones, outside Wynnsdale in Park Lane;
- The ample amount of amenity space;
- Groups of mature trees;
- Attractive grass verges, particularly around the village green, featuring seasonal planting;
- Pleasant countryside walks that pass through the Conservation Area.

### 7.3 **Key negatives:**

- The appearance of some of the modern buildings in the Conservation Area, which have no special interest, notably: Stretton Road west of Brierley Cottage, the north side of Park Lane from Rickyard House to Park Court, Bickford Close and the housing in Bickford Road north of The Vaughn Arms;
- The need for maintenance on The Vaughn Arms frontage which has been painted but is flaking and unattractive;
- The pebbledash façade of Park House is patchy and could possibly have its appearance improved though maintenance work;
- A lack of seating in the main part of the village green;
- Some of the public realm, such as litter bins and possibly street lighting, needs updating;
- The site of the former Priory may not be adequately protected from development by its current non-designated status;
- The K6 telephone kiosk on the green may not be adequately protected from development by its current non-designated status;
- There is currently no covered community space, such as a church hall, in the village;
- The appearance of the telegraph poles and overhead wires, particularly on the west side of the village green.



### **Images from Top to Bottom**

- Modern development on the village edge
- The village's K6 telephone kiosk may need further protection



# 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 Lapley Conservation Area:

- Maintenance of the rural character;
- Need to carry out public realm improvements (possibly street lighting);
- Use of modern materials and details on historic buildings;
- Need for full Local List assessment;
- Need to consider level of protection currently afforded to the site of the former Priory and the K6 telephone kiosk on the green;
- Need for revision of the Conservation Area boundary.

## 8.2 Conservation Area boundary review:

8.2.1 A number of boundary deletions would improve the extent to which the designation accurately reflects the special character of Lapley:

### ***Proposed Deletions:***

- Stretton Road west of Brierley Cottage, including Cornstalks, Long View, Meadow View and Nos.4-8;
- The north side of Park Lane from Rickyard House to Park Court;
- Bickford Close;
- Housing in Bickford Road north of The Vaughn Arms, but excluding Providence Cottage and Nos. 7-9 Bickford Road.

## 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 to the north of the earthworks;
- Fields to the south of the cemetery;
- Fields to the south of Park House and Parkfield Cottage;
- Fields to the north and east of Park Cottages.

8.3.2 These are shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map [see pp. 20-21].

## Appendix 2: Local Plan Policies

- 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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[Eastern Division]*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959

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## Appendix 4: Locally Listed Buildings Map (overleaf)





South Staffordshire Council  
 Conservation Area Appraisals  
**Lapley Conservation Area**  
 Locally Listed Buildings

(Not to scale)

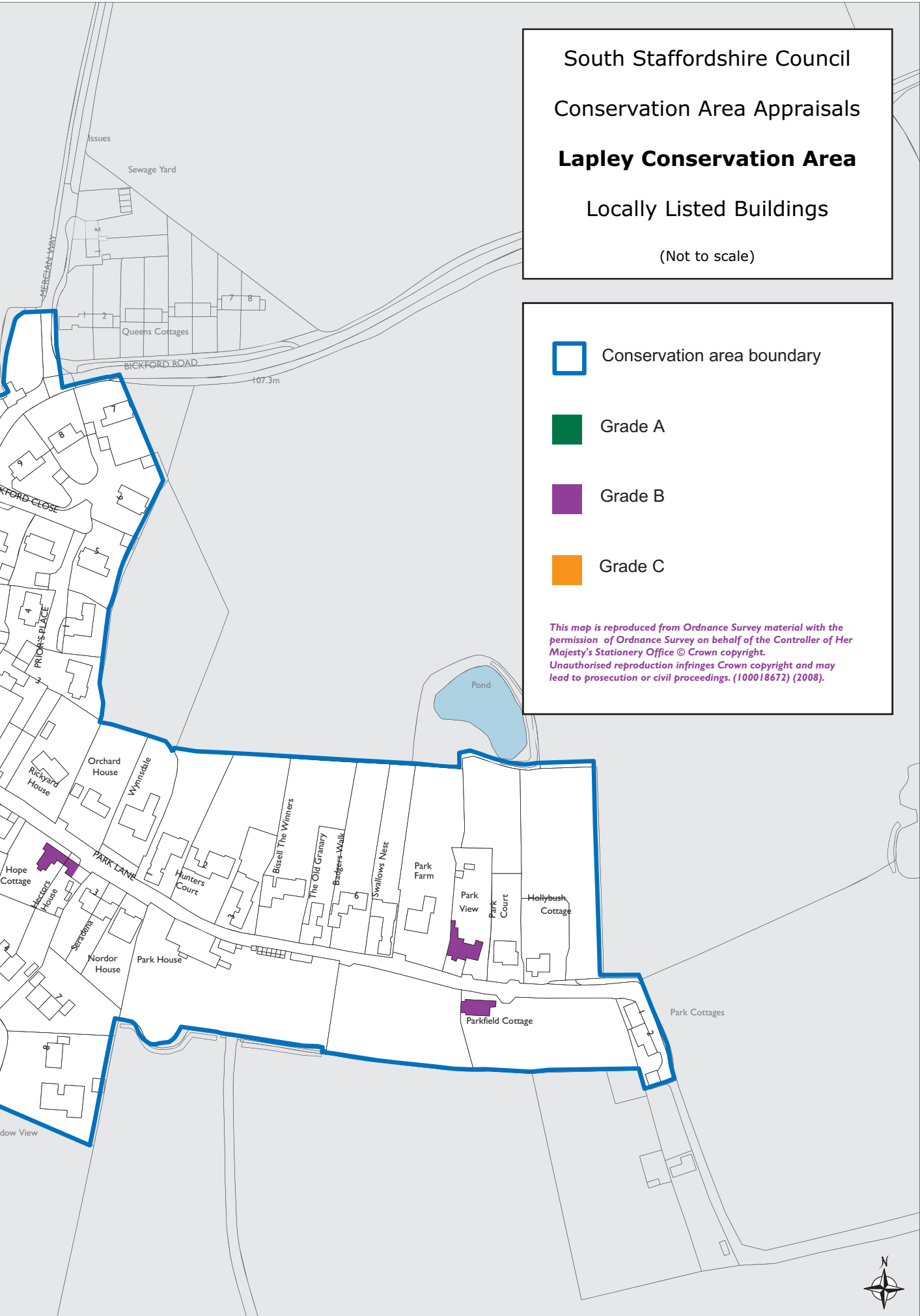
 Conservation area boundary

 Grade A

 Grade B

 Grade C

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



**South Staffordshire Council**