

# Lower Penn

## 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 Lower Penn 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](mailto:info@theconservationstudio.co.uk)

[www.theconservationstudio.co.uk](http://www.theconservationstudio.co.uk)

# Lower Penn 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 Lower Penn 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 Lower Penn 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 The Victory Hall on the afternoon of Tuesday 24th June 2008, at which 13 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. Lower Penn 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.

2.2.2 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 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 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 Lower Penn 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. Lower Penn 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 Lower Penn 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 Lower Penn.

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 Lower Penn.

This includes the fields immediately surrounding the Conservation Area, with the exception of those to the southwest of its westernmost part, which it is felt, is adequately 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 Lower Penn 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:

- Victory Hall
- Holly Cottage

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

- The Victory Hall car park
- The Greyhound car park.

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

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

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

### 3.4 Amenity space

3.4.1 Lower Penn benefits from small areas of public open space within the Conservation Area that contributes to its character and appearance. 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 Lower Penn 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 Lower Penn 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 Lower Penn'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 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 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 Lower Penn 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 Lower Penn 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: Lower Penn Conservation Area Appraisal

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# 1. Summary

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

- A historic agricultural village on the edge of the West Midlands Conurbation focused around farmhouses, cottages and a small church along a long winding country lane;
- Historic buildings and other structures, with four listed examples in the Conservation Area, including two farmhouses and two 17th century timber framed cottages;
- 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 to the north that gives extensive views over the neighbouring countryside, which reinforces the spacious character of this dispersed settlement;
- Historic boundaries including sandstone walling, red brick walling, hedging and ornate cast iron railings;
- Some modern development introduced between the historic buildings;
- Focal points provided by the green, the church, the crossroads, The Greyhound and the Victory Hall, which act as the hubs of commercial and social activity;
- Some groups of trees, notably to the west around Pear Tree Farm. Many mature specimens grow on the roadside behind hedges and walls.



## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 The Lower Penn Conservation Area

2.1.1 Staffordshire County Council designated the Lower Penn Conservation Area on 22nd January 1980. It covers the historic core of the agricultural village of Lower Penn, which stretches along the linear route of Spring Hill Lane from the small green next to Dirty Foot Lane to the busy crossroads by The Greyhound Inn and a short way along Greyhound Lane.

2.1.2 Lower Penn is a small rural hamlet on the outskirts of Penn, an ancient settlement, which by the 20th century had become a suburb of the large urban settlement of Wolverhampton. The urban townscape abruptly ends on the approach to the village and gives way to a rural country lane with views across the Midlands countryside. The quiet hamlet of Lower Penn has no shops, only a public house, a small church and 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 extensive views over the countryside. Some modern buildings have been introduced to the settlement; however, 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 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 Lower Penn 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 Lower Penn 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 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 development within the Lower Penn 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 24 confirms that the following policies apply to the Lower Penn Conservation Area or to the land that surrounds it:

- Conservation Area Policies: BE5, 7, 9, 12, 14-19
- Green Belt: Policies GB1, C1-4, 8 & 13;
- Landscape Improvement Area: Policies LS9 & 10;
- BE26 (New Development – Design Criteria).

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 Lower Penn lies south west of Wolverhampton on the edge of the West Midlands Conurbation. The village is on the periphery of a busy urban centre, at the gateway to outlying countryside that stretches west to the Shropshire border. The large village of Wombourne is about a mile south and the rural villages of Seisdon and Trysull lie a few miles west.

3.1.2 The Conservation Area is in a largely rural setting with undeveloped land mainly ancillary to farms that surround the settlement. The countryside to the west is unspoilt and crossed only by minor country roads and farm tracks. However, the area to the north and east is heavily developed and although its visual impact on the Conservation Area is slight, the city brings increased traffic load to Lower Penn.

3.1.3 The main A449 runs very close to the village's eastern border and separates it from the parish church at Upper Penn. A steady stream of traffic passes along Dene Road and Market Lane through the centre of the Conservation Area and thus its proximity to a major urban centre has an impact on the Conservation Area.

3.1.4 Activity within the Conservation Area is mainly related to residential and agricultural uses. There is a church, a public house with restaurant and a village hall, which serve the community although the general pace of life in Lower Penn is very sedate. The main focus of activity is the regular traffic, which passes through Lower Penn via the crossroads by The Greyhound. There are no shops or other facilities.

### 3.2 Topography & geology

3.2.1 Lower Penn stands on a ridge (Spring Hill) that runs down from higher ground around the Parish Church of St Bartholomew some two miles to the east of the Conservation Area. The landscape falls away steadily as urban fabric gives way to Lower Penn's pastures, characteristic of the rolling countryside on Wolverhampton's western perimeter. As it descends to the west, Spring Hill Lane leads down the ridge; in the Conservation Area's centre the road is at a lower level, such that views to north and south are limited. The mainly flat topography to the west was ideal for the canals and railways built in the area during the 18th and 20th centuries.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- The winding Spring Hill Lane links Lower Penn with the main A449
- The busy crossroads by The Greyhound Inn, Lower Penn
- Lower Penn's situation affords views out towards Wolverhampton's western perimeter

3.2.2 The landscape falls away from its peak at the junction of Spring Hill Lane and Dirty Foot Lane. The two lanes meander downhill away from the green and Spring Hill Lane levels off before plunging downhill once more as it leaves the Conservation Area in the west. From the elevated locations at Lower Penn Farmhouse, Manor Farm and Home Farm there are extensive views over the countryside towards the Shropshire border. These vistas, along with the middle distance views to the north and south afforded through the considerable gaps between buildings and along the lanes, help give Lower Penn a spacious rural appearance.

3.2.3 The village soil is a gravelly loam and the surrounding countryside has a mixture of soils, including light and mixed loams, clay and sand. Historically, gravel pits were dug in and around the village and these are marked on early maps. A large and successful brick works was located in nearby Penn between the 1840s and 1930s. The soft sandstone rock that is also found in the wider area is used in the distinctive boundary walls, notably in the embankment made by a cutting into the hillside at Manor Farm, known locally as 'The Rock'. The late 19th century church was constructed of sandstone.

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

3.3.1 The Lower Penn Conservation Area is bordered by farmland to the north, south and west, by urban townscape to the east. Its apparent isolated setting is an important factor in the identification and maintenance of its traditional rural appearance. However, considering the extensive views across the countryside the proximity to a busy townscape is at some locations hard to reconcile. Also, some modern development, such as the rows of houses along Market Lane, outside the Conservation Area, is well placed in the landscape and is unobtrusive in the rural setting.

3.3.2 Small hamlets and villages lie scattered across the Staffordshire countryside close by. The intrusion of modern infrastructure on this rural scene is limited to the A449 to the east, which has no visual or aural affect on the Conservation Area.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- A number of Lower Penn's farmhouses sit in an elevated position
- The soil in Lower Penn is a mix of loams, clay and sand
- Looking down Spring Hill Lane towards The Greyhound Inn



## 4. Historic development & archaeology

### 4.1 Historic development

4.1.1 The name 'Penn' is derived from the old English meaning 'hill'. This is likely to refer to the high ground around St Bartholomew's Church in the eastern part of the parish, known as Upper Penn. The ancient track way of Penn Way led southwards from Bushway to Upper Penn, and Lower Penn stands to the west on a ridgeway that affords extensive views across the West Midlands countryside to the Wrekin.

4.1.2 The villages of Upper Penn and Lower Penn were established on land held by Saxon nobility when the previously wooded landscape was cleared in the centuries leading up to the Norman Conquest. A Saxon preaching cross was discovered close to St Bartholomew's Church, which points to some settlement in the area by the Saxon era.

4.1.3 By the time of Domesday, Lower Penn and Upper Penn were in the ownership of William Fitzansculph, Lord of Dudley. Lower Penn is referred to as 'Penne' and was home to six villagers. It was a tiny hamlet next to the slightly larger settlement of Upper Penn or 'Penna'. Penn developed as a farming community as the wooded area was cleared over time.

4.1.4 During the Middle Ages, Lower Penn was established as the Manor of Nether Penn while Upper Penn are was in the Manor of Over Penn. A church was established at Upper Penn by 1200, where the majority of local activity became focused. By the end of the medieval period Penn had slowly grown and some local families had grown prosperous through the cultivation of the land.

4.1.5 The fruits of the hospitable farmland resulted in the construction of substantial buildings from the 16th century. Lower Penn Farmhouse may date from this era or slightly later. Malthouse Cottage and Walnut Tree Cottage were constructed in the 17th century and are surviving examples of the vernacular timber framing building methods of the time. Manor Farmhouse was built in the mid 18th century and is marked as the Manor House on 19th century maps. It may be the site of an earlier manor house.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- John Speed's map of Lower Penn, 1610
- The Church of St. Anne, Lower Penn, in the 1970s
- Manor Farmhouse, Lower Penn



4.1.6 Throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries Lower Penn remained a small agricultural community with a scattering of cottages and farmhouses. The Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal opened in 1772 and passes to the west of Lower Penn.

4.1.7 By 1851 Lower Penn had grown to accommodate a boarding school, a free school (with around 100 pupils) as well as a butcher shop. However, the majority of Lower Penn inhabitants were still farmers. The 1880 Ordnance Survey map shows many of the key historic buildings in Lower Penn, the farmhouses and cottages. Also marked are unlisted historic buildings such as Pear Tree Farm, The Greyhound Inn, Orchard Cottages, The Orchards Farm, The Forge, Valcroft, Rose Cottage (on a much smaller footprint) and Charlton House and barns. The distinctive road layout including the crossroads is shown along with other features such as sand and gravel pits.

4.1.8 The 1901 and 1917 maps show some minor changes in the built form, although Lower Penn remained relatively unchanged over the next 40 years. Firstly, the 1901 map shows that a house on the south side of Spring Hill Lane was replaced with St Anne's Church, a relatively small place of worship that has the appearance of a sandstone chapel. The absence of street and field boundary trees on this map gives clearer indications of the built form in Lower Penn at this time. However, it is still clear that this was a sparsely populated rural settlement.

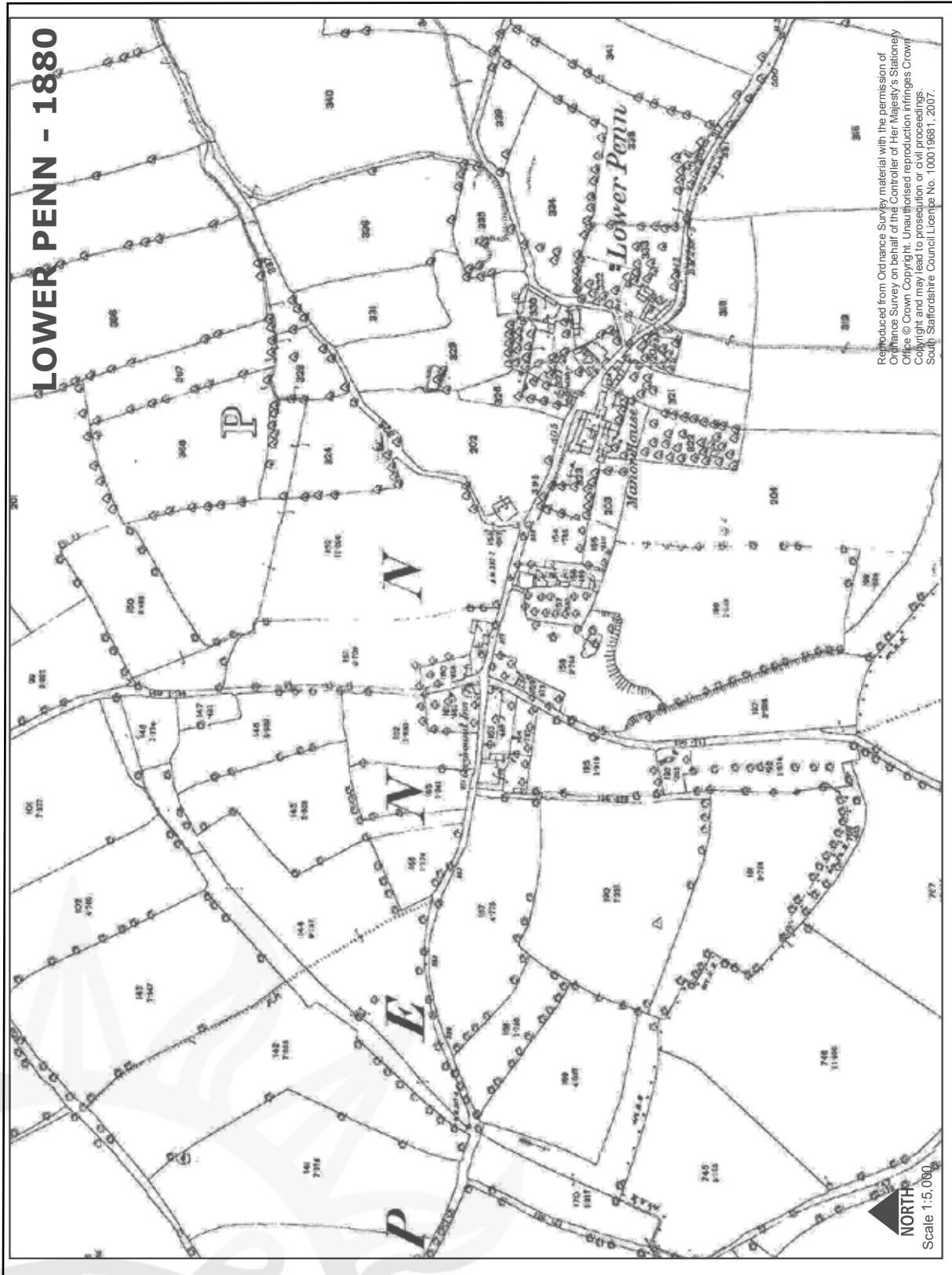
4.1.9 By 1917, some other buildings had been constructed, such as New Cottages to the west of the smithy (The Forge) on Spring Hill Lane, and others were demolished, such as the barn to the west of Manor Farm. One notable introduction to the local landscape is the construction of the Wolverhampton & Bridgnorth Railway Line to the west of the village and its short-lived Penn Halt.

4.1.10 Small, gradual changes took place in Lower Penn after the First World War up to the present day. These include the construction of the Victory Hall, the redevelopment of an earlier cottage into Keepers Cottage and Poachers Cottage, The conversion of Manor Farmhouse ancillary buildings into residential accommodation, the reconstruction



### Images from Top to Bottom

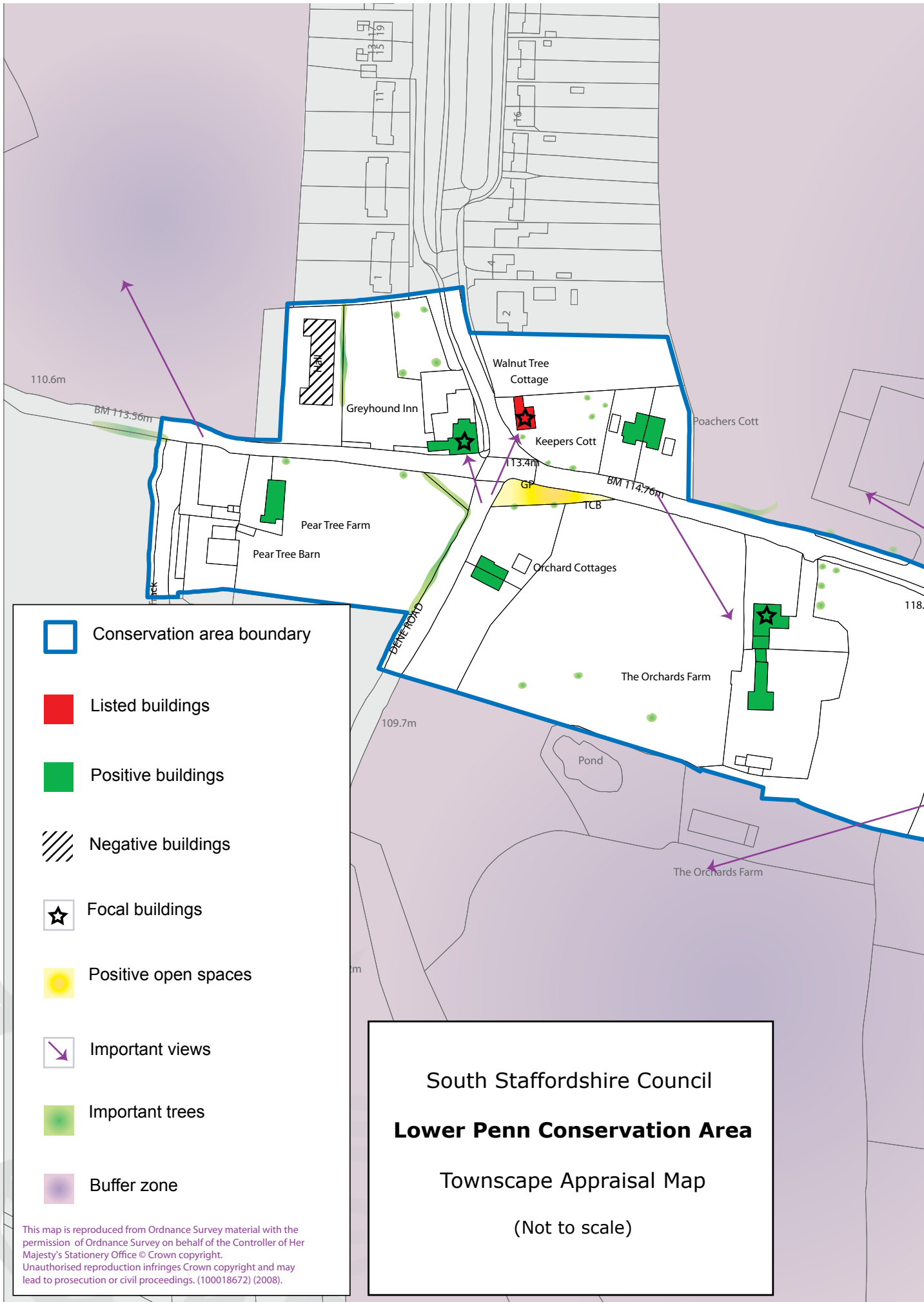
- The Greyhound Inn, Lower Penn
- The Church of St. Anne, Lower Penn, is small and chapel-like
- Penn Halt (open between 1925-1932) seen in 1954
- Victory Hall, Lower Penn



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**Image**

- Lower Penn - Ordnance Survey Map 1880



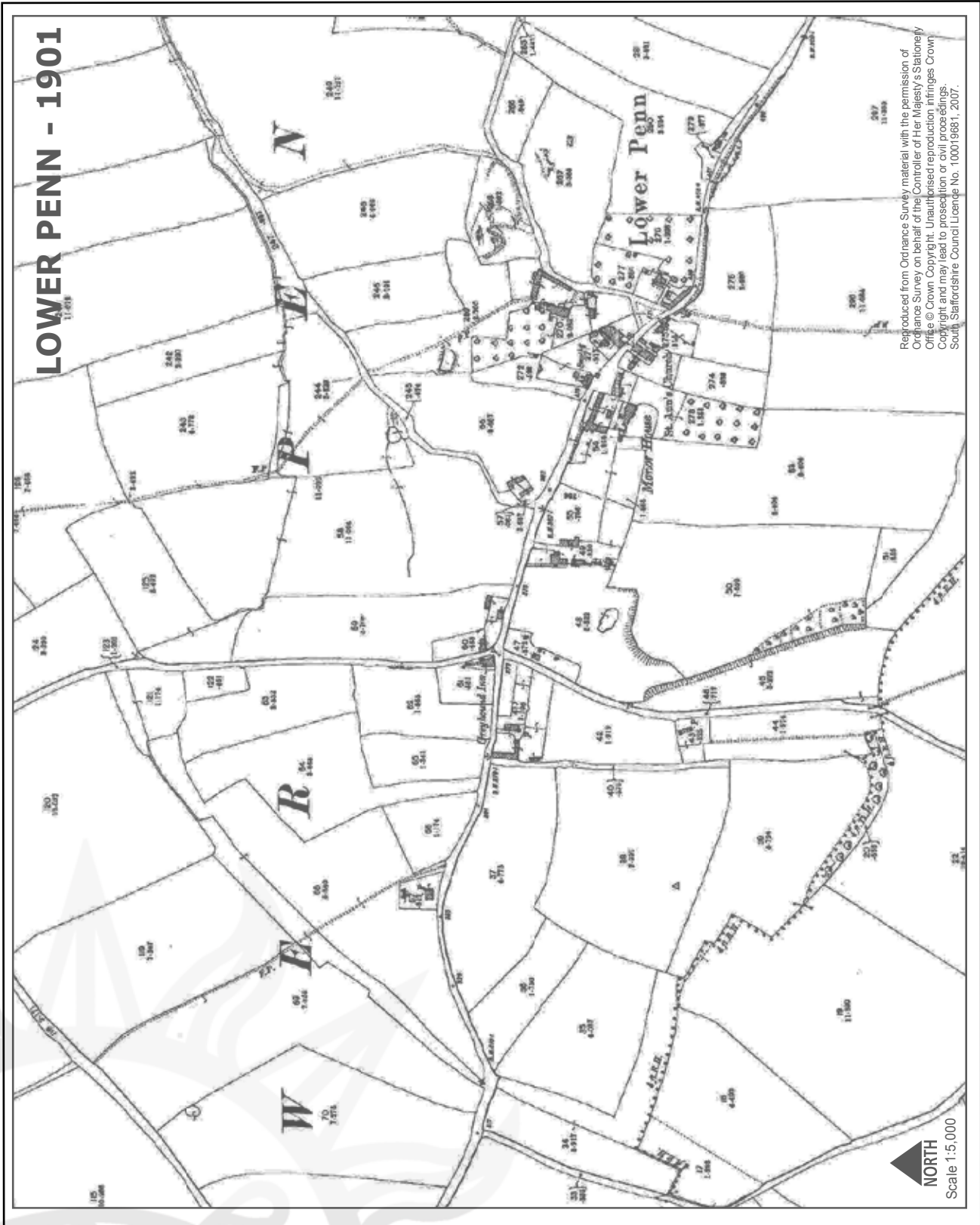
- Conservation area boundary
- Listed buildings
- Positive buildings
- Negative buildings
- ★ Focal buildings
- Positive open spaces
- Important views
- Important trees
- Buffer zone

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South Staffordshire Council  
**Lower Penn Conservation Area**  
 Townscape Appraisal Map  
 (Not to scale)

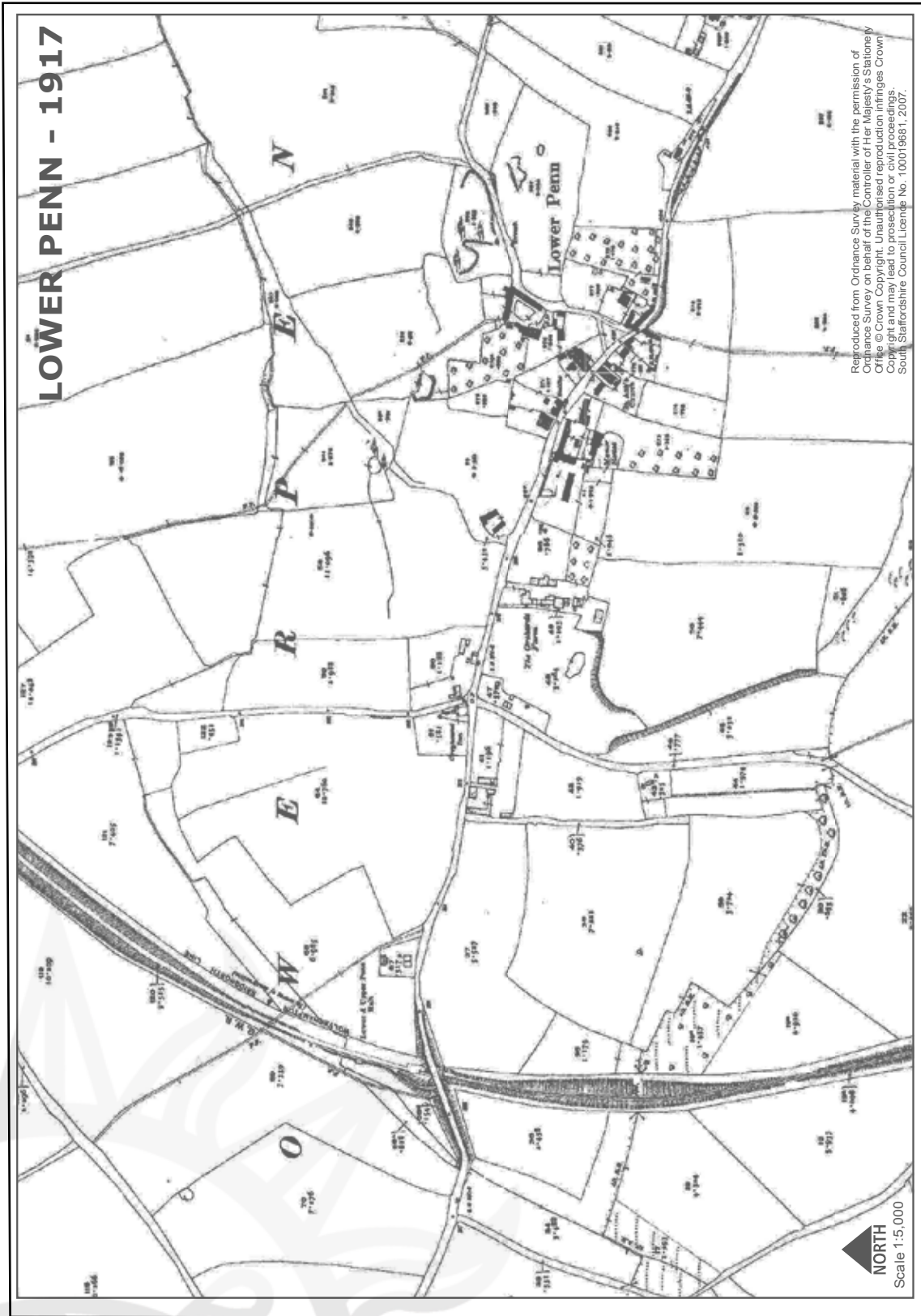






**Image**

- Lower Penn - Ordnance Survey Map 1901



### Image

- Lower Penn - Ordnance Survey Map 1917

of Home Farm and the insertion of some infill development such as No.3 New Cottages, Holly Cottage and Meadow Side. Lower Penn retained its very loose knit rural village appearance as other houses were built, and this pleasant character led, in the 1940s, to the Lower Penn Horticultural Show becoming established as an annual event.

4.1.11 In the latter half of the 20th century, facilities such as shops and schools are still mainly provided in the neighbouring suburban centre, although The Greyhound, village hall and church continue to operate successfully in the village.

## 4.2 Archaeology

4.2.1 There are eight records on Staffordshire County Historic Environment Record for Lower Penn and its immediate surroundings. These refer to the Domesday Book entry and listed buildings descriptions. Therefore, there are no recorded archaeological finds in the Conservation Area.

4.2.2 Two significant sections of embankment are noted on historic maps to the south of The Orchards Farm and may be the remnants of early historic development or land management. Furthermore, while its exact location is unknown, a Roman road connecting Pennocrucium, a Roman town or way-station to the north near Brewood, to a Roman Fort at Greensforge in the south passed close to or through Lower Penn. There is no archaeological evidence of the road.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Despite more recent infill development, much of Lower Penn retains its rural character
- Lower Penn still has a loose knit village appearance



## 5. Spatial analysis

### 5.1 Plan, form & layout

5.1.1 Lower Penn is a dispersed hamlet with two separate focuses. To the west it centres on The Greyhound Inn/Victory Hall crossroads. To the east, the village green and surrounding barns and cottages help to create the appearance of a traditional rural hamlet. The area between them lacks focus, as it is essentially a country lane lined by hedges and grass verges and a loose scattering of houses and farms. The settlement stretches along the mainly straight lane, which winds around the green in the east and leads towards the neighbouring modern suburban parts of Penn.

5.1.2 Throughout the Conservation Area small groups of buildings line the road, usually facing it but sometimes set at right angles to the road edge. At the west end of Spring Hill Lane there are large individual buildings such as Pear Tree Farm, Victory Hall and The Greyhound, which stand in large plots. Further east, cottages are arranged around the crossroads before the streetscape opens up into farmland. In this more open section of the lane stand large farmhouses with outbuildings.

5.1.3 The spaciousness of the central part of the Conservation Area ends at Manor Farm where the former outbuildings (now converted to residential use) provide a tighter built form. However, the buildings are set back from the road in an elevated position behind tall brick and stonewalling. The cutting through the hillside and neighbouring embankment is known locally as The Rock. The houses and cottages further along Spring Hill Lane are set close to the road edge facing each other, and create a short stretch of cohesive village scape with buildings on both sides.

5.1.4 Further east, the streetscape opens up once more at the green. Rose Cottage and the barn to Charlton House enclose the green on the southern side. The other sides are more open although sandstone walling and some mature trees provide some sense of enclosure. However, a sense of openness is given by the position of Malthouse Cottage, which is set back from the road, and the opening to Dirty Foot Lane granting views to the historic brick barn of Lower Penn Farm and the countryside beyond.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- The dispersed parts of Lower Penn are linked by a lane lined with grass verges and hedges
- Victory Hall is one of several large buildings at the west end of Spring Hill Lane, Lower Penn
- The Lower Penn streetscape opens up at the green, by the junction with Dirtyfoot Lane, right



## 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 buildings and their striking architecture. These are Lower Penn Farm and barn, Charlton House barn, Malthouse Cottage (attached malthouse), St Anne's Church, The Orchards Farm, Walnut Tree Cottage and The Greyhound Inn.

5.2.2 The Greyhound Inn is the most important landmark in Lower Penn, dominating the corner of Greyhound Lane and Market Lane in the west of the Conservation Area. It stands close to the pavement edge with a clean rendered exterior. Opposite, Walnut Tree Cottage is set behind a tall hedge (including a concealed electric gate) although its exposed timber frame and brightly painted infill panels is still an eye-catching feature in the streetscape, especially on the approach from Dene Road.

5.2.3 The Orchards Farm is a landmark due to its isolated location in largely open fields and there are views through to it from Spring Hill Lane. Its connecting barns and outhouses extend southwards and enhance the historic agricultural appearance of the main building despite the fact that some of the structures are of modern construction.

5.2.4 The former malthouse attached to Malthouse Cottage forms an important group with St Anne's Church and the two buildings form a narrow gateway to the village green. The white painted brick façade of the malthouse and the external steps leading to a first floor front door provide some of Lower Penn's working agricultural hamlet character. The church is notable for the sandstone façade, which is set close to the road as well as the black and white painted gable end and painted timber bell tower.

5.2.5 The principal focal point is the village green although it is modestly sized and relatively uncluttered with furniture. It provides an important open space within the Conservation Area and links three of the roads in the hamlet.

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 long views



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Walnut Tree Cottage is timber-framed and a striking presence in Lower Penn
- The Greyhound Inn is Lower Penn's most important landmark
- The converted former malthouse on Spring Hill Lane

out of the designated area are westwards looking down Spring Hill Lane from outside the church and from Lower Penn Farm looking north and west.

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 pp. 20-21].

### 5.3 Open spaces, trees & landscape

5.3.1 The Conservation Area is notable for the openness of the built form, except around Manor Farm where barn conversions set out in a traditional farm building layout, are densely packed. This openness is derived from the large plots of some buildings, the gaps between houses and farms, the grass verges along some parts of the roads and the front gardens to many houses. Together with the generous expanse of the fields, the village green provides an important open space. The car park to The Greyhound and the small, grassed area to the north of Orchard Cottages provide some spaciousness to the western section of the Conservation Area. The car parks to The Greyhound and Victory Hall are mainly covered in tarmac and do not benefit from any extensive landscaping.

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 Pear Tree Farm and Charlton House. Further trees are visible in the surrounding landscape, particularly in the views south from Spring Hill Lane. These trees and the 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 pp. 20-21].

### 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

- The converted farm buildings by Manor Farm are a rare example of densely packed buildings
- The Greyhound car park provides spaciousness to the western end of the Conservation Area
- Trees provide an important green backdrop to the Lower Penn 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 small section of modern pavement outside The Greyhound that extends around the corner into Market Lane. It is covered in tarmacadam with concrete kerbs. Some of the verges, such as by the K6 telephone kiosk and outside Home Farm, have concrete kerbs on their roadside edges.



All the roadways are covered in black tarmacadam, although narrow strips of grass and sections of verge line much of Spring Hill Lane. There is also a section of grass verge outside Lower Penn Farm on Dirty Foot Lane. Some attractive diamond sets have been laid on the steps up to the church.

#### 5.4.3 **Street lighting:**

There is a mixture of styles of streetlights in the Conservation Area, although there are relatively few street lighting units in total. One lamp is fixed to a telegraph pole at the west end of Greyhound Lane and makes little impact on the street scene. A red and white painted steel lamp standard is positioned on the corner of Spring Hill Lane and Dene Road. It features a Victorian-style lantern and is prominently sited. Two additional steel standards stand further east, one outside The Forge and one in the middle of the village green. Both of these have overhanging lamps.



#### 5.4.4 **Street signs:**

The street signs in the Conservation Area are mostly modern and fixed to the pavement on steel supports or directly onto boundary walls. In the Conservation Area modern highway signs are clustered mostly around the crossroads by The Greyhound and by the green to the east. On the grassed area to the north of Orchard Cottages there is a replica cast iron finger post sign directing traffic to neighbouring settlements.



#### 5.4.5 Other features:

- A K6 telephone kiosk and modern electricity cabinet stand on the wide grass verge to the north of Orchard Cottages. Short white painted timber posts border the area.
- At the entrance to Manor Farm an electrical transformer is fitted to two telegraph poles and makes an unsightly addition to the street scene.

### Images from Top to Bottom

- Paving outside The Greyhound Inn is a rare example in the otherwise unpaved Lower Penn
- An authentic replica cast iron fingerpost sign erected at The Greyhound Inn crossroads
- A K6 telephone kiosk and an example of the modern street signage in Lower Penn

- A modern electricity cabinet, litterbin and timber bench on the village green.
- A line of rocks and glazed pieces of brick and stone have been set in the edge of the road surface by the wall to the south of Lower Penn Farm.
- A large modern green structure, a water pumping unit, stands behind a five bar gate beside the road to the east of Poachers Cottages.



**Images from Top to Bottom**

- An unsightly electricity transformer at the entrance to Manor Farm
- A line of rocks and glazed bricks set along the edge of the wall around Lower Penn Farm
- The water pumping unit on the roadside east of Poachers Cottages



## 6. The buildings of the Conservation Area

### 6.1 Building types

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

6.1.2 Other building types include a place of worship (St Anne's Church), a village hall, a public house and restaurant 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. They are protected by statute law and consent is required from South Staffordshire Council before any 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 four listing entries on the Statutory List within the Lower Penn Conservation Area. They are all listed Grade II:

- Walnut Tree Cottage is a 17th century timber-framed cottage with plaster infill panels and a steep tiled roof and brick chimneystack.
- Manor Farm is a mid 18th century farmhouse built of red brick in an L-plan with the main range facing Spring Hill Lane over a towering three-storey height. It is five bays wide with casement windows and details such as an eaves band and segmental window heads.
- Malthouse Cottage is a 17th century timber-framed structure, remodelled in the 19th century with a roughcast rendered front. Single-storey plus attic, its steep tile roof gives the building added presence in the Conservation Area. It is listed together with the attached former maltings.
- Lower Penn Farm is a former farmhouse with a 16th or 17th century core. It was extended in the 18th century and is a large red brick building with a range of heights set behind a rich red brick boundary wall.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Church of St Anne, Lower Penn
- Manor Farmhouse
- Lower Penn Farm

### 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.

#### **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 Lower Penn are being proposed for inclusion on the Local List:

#### **Grade A**

- Spring Hill Lane: K6 telephone kiosk
- Dirty Foot Lane: Charlton House

#### **Grade B**

- Spring Hill Lane: The Orchards Farm, St Anne's Church, workshop east of St Anne's Church, Rose Cottage, Valcroft, The Forge, New Cottages



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

- K6 telephone kiosk close to The Greyhound crossroads
- Charlton House, Dirtyfoot Lane
- Workshop east of the Church of St Anne



- Dirty Foot Lane: Charlton House barn
- Dene Road: Orchard Cottages
- Greyhound Lane: Pear Tree Farm, The Greyhound Inn

### **Grade C**

- Spring Hill Lane: Keepers Cottage, Poachers Cottages

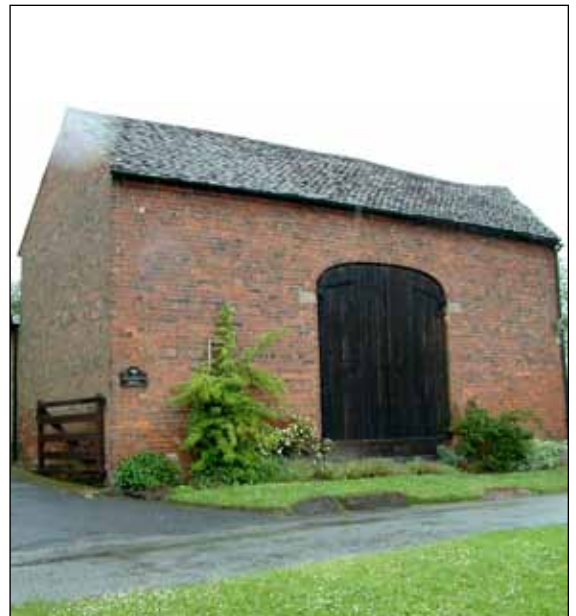
6.3.4 Please Note: Buildings which are curtilage structures of statutory listed buildings and therefore protected by this designation have not been considered for the Local List so as to not risk confusion over their already considerable protection. The omission of any particular building does not imply 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 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.



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

- The Forge, Spring Hill Lane
- Charlton House Barn
- Poacher's Cottages

6.4.3 The positive buildings are:

**Places of Worship**

- St Anne's Church

**Public Houses**

- The Greyhound Inn

**Farm buildings and former industrial buildings**

- Charlton House barn; Lower Penn Farm barn; Manor Farm outbuildings; Pear Tree Farm; The Forge; The Orchards Farm and outbuildings

**Early houses or cottages**

- Charlton House; Keepers Cottage; New Cottages; Orchard Cottages; Poachers Cottage; Rose Cottage; Valcroft

**Individual buildings**

- Chimneys; Workshop to the east of St Anne's Church

**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

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



**Images from Top to Bottom**

- Converted outbuildings at Manor Farm
- Pear Tree Farm
- Rose Cottage, Spring Hill Lane



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 Lower Penn are:

- Greyhound Lane: Victory Hall
- Spring Hill Lane: Holly Cottage

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 Walnut Tree Cottage is the only remaining building in the Conservation Area that is clearly constructed using timber frame methods, although Lower Penn Farm and Malthouse Cottage also have timber-framed cores. Traditionally timber-framed buildings had either wattle and daub or lime plaster infill panels, but were replaced over time with brick infill panels. Walnut Cottage is unusual, as it appears as to have retained plaster panels. The other timber-framed structures 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



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Although a much used community facility, Victory Hall's design detracts from overall character
- Malthouse Cottage, Spring Hill Lane, has a timber-framed core
- Walnut Tree Cottage, the only building in Lower Penn that is clearly timber-framed

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 Overall, 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 clockwise from top right to bottom left**

- Sandstone is used widely for walling throughout the Lower Penn Conservation Area
- The predominant cottage type is red/brown brick 19th century, like this example
- Hedging, walling and railings have all been used to form boundaries
- Stone walls, hedging and trees lining both sides of Dirtyfoot Lane



# 7. Character analysis

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

7.2 **Key positives:**

- Rural location and rural qualities with farm buildings, cottages and country lanes;
- A number of historic buildings, most notably Manor Farm, Lower Penn Farm, Walnut Tree Cottage, Malthouse Cottage, The Forge and St Anne's Church;
- The scattered groupings of small cottages and large farm houses along Spring Hill Lane;
- Extensive views across the countryside to the north and west;
- 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;
- Sedate volume and pace of traffic along Spring Hill Lane;
- Characterful outbuildings associated with the farmhouses;
- Sandstone, brick boundary walls and cast iron railings;
- The ornate cast iron railings topping a rubble sandstone wall outside Rose Cottage;
- Groups of mature trees at both ends of the Conservation Area.

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;
- The traffic through the junction by The Greyhound;
- The appearance of the car parks to The Greyhound and Victory Hall
- The lack of any facilities such as a post office or small local shop.



**Images from Top to Bottom**

- Lower Penn's historic buildings include the Church of St Anne, Spring Hill Lane
- Traffic through the junction by The Greyhound Inn is seen as a Key Negative
- The negative appearance of the adjoining car parks to Victory Hall and The Greyhound Inn



## 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 Lower Penn Conservation Area:

- Maintenance of the rural character;
- Volume of traffic through parts of the Conservation Area;
- 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 Lower Penn.

### 8.3 Buffer Zones

8.3.1 The identification of 'Buffer Zones' would recognise the impact that development in certain areas could have on the neighbouring designated Conservation Area. The proposed buffer zones are:

- Fields to the northwest of Pear Tree Farm and The Greyhound Inn;
- Fields to the north and east of Spring Hill Lane;
- Fields to the south of The Orchards Farm.

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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## Appendix 4: Contacts

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

01902 696000  
[www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk)

Conservation Team:  
[conservation@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:conservation@sstaffs.gov.uk)  
01902 696425

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

01785 277281  
[her@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:her@staffordshire.gov.uk)

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

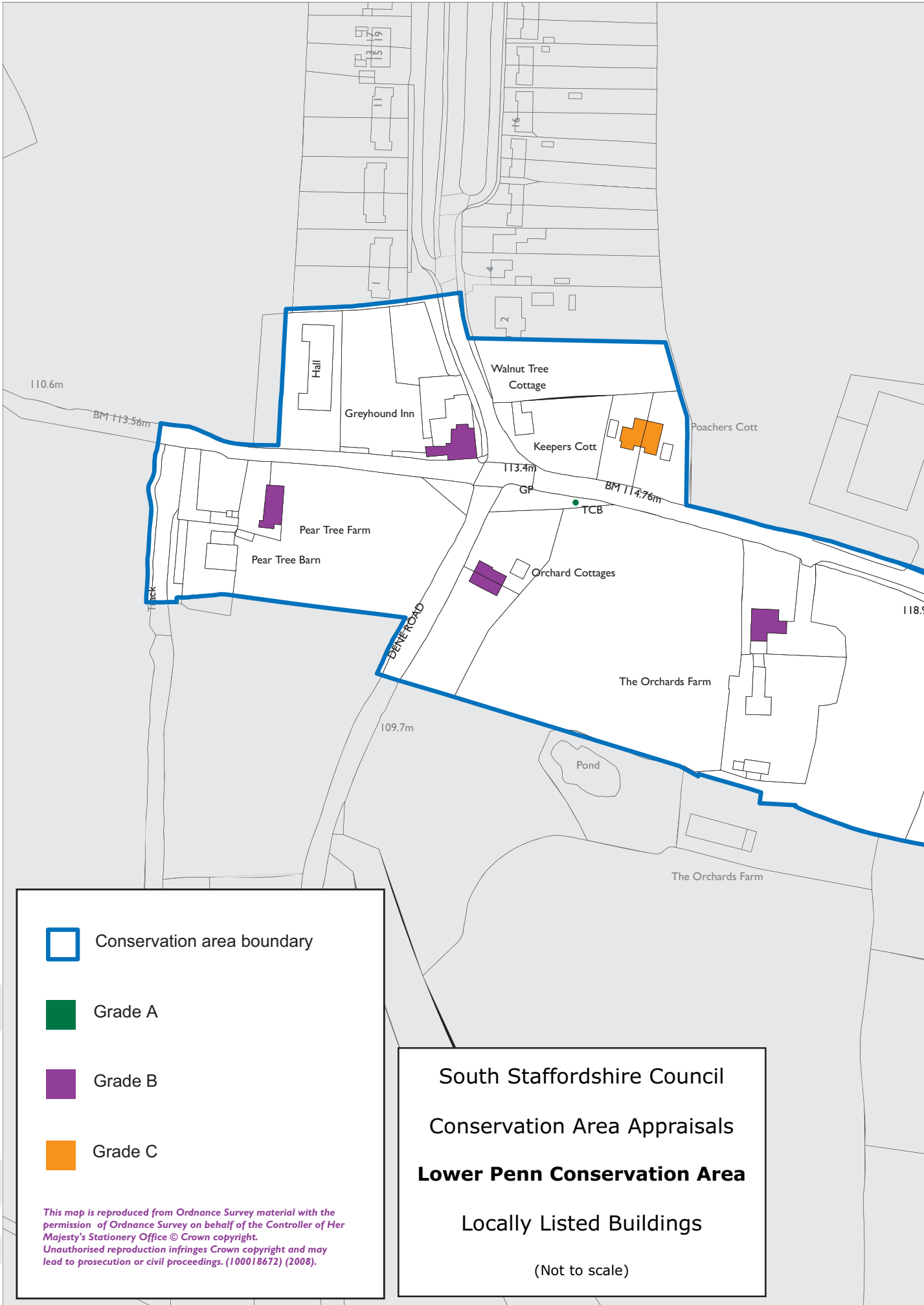
020 7973 3000  
[customers@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:customers@english-heritage.org.uk)


English Heritage (West Midlands)  
The Axis  
10 Holliday Street  
BirminghamB1 1TG


0121 625 6820  
[westmidlands@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:westmidlands@english-heritage.org.uk)


## Appendix 5: Locally Listed Buildings Map (overleaf)






 Conservation area boundary

 Grade A

 Grade B

 Grade C

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South Staffordshire Council  
Conservation Area Appraisals  
**Lower Penn Conservation Area**  
Locally Listed Buildings  
(Not to scale)





**Lower Penn Conservation Area Management Plan  
Adopted 11 November 2010**



**South Staffordshire Council**