

**Wheaton Aston Conservation Areas**

**Key**

- Canal Conservation Area
- Conservation Area
- Development Boundary

**NORTH**  
Scale 1:4,500

# Wheaton Aston

## 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 Wheaton Aston 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**



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# Wheaton Aston 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 Wheaton Aston 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 Wheaton Aston 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 South Staffordshire Council's existing policies, 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. Wheaton Aston 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.

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.

2.2.2 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 Wheaton Aston 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 included consulted early on regarding any proposals to affect material changes to conservation areas. It is often the case that they can bring previous experience, as well as through understanding of the needs of an area, to the process.

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 thorough 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. Wheaton Aston Conservation Area – Specific actions

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

### 3.1 Conservation Area boundary review

3.1.1 A character appraisal was written after completion of a thorough survey of the Wheaton Aston Conservation Area. This concluded that boundary revisions would be required to ensure that the designation accurately reflects the Conservation Area's special character:

Proposed deletions:

- Coach Gardens;
- Barn Cottage and Gander Cottage;
- Burnsall House, The Larches and The Hollies, Hawthorne Drive;
- Providence Cottage, School Road;
- Nos. 1 and 2 Windmill Cottages, Mill Lane.

3.1.2 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]. None of the individual properties within the areas proposed for deletion have any specific architectural or historic special interest and do not make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

Proposed addition:

- The Old School House, School Road

These proposed changes are shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map [see pp. 22-23].

3.1.3 **ACTION:** *The Council will designate a revised Conservation Area boundary respecting the deletions and addition cited above.*

3.1.4 **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 Wheaton Aston 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:

- Cuttlestone House and Forge House, Frog Lane;
- Bank Cottage and Bank House, Frog Lane;
- Nos. 1 and 2 Windmill Cottage, Windmill Lane;
- Wheaton Aston Village Hall.

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

- The surface car park to the north of No.1 Hawthorne Road;
- The forecourt to the supermarket.

3.2.3 **ACTION:** *The Council will seek to ensure that further developments in the Wheaton Aston Conservation Area respect its historic character. Schemes that are not of a design or scale that is sympathetic to the character of Wheaton Aston 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 Wheaton Aston in terms of density and scale.*

### 3.3 Setting, views & gateways

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.

3.3.2 Elsewhere in the District the setting of conservation areas has been given additional protection by the designation of a buffer zone surrounding it in whole or part. In Wheaton Aston it was felt that such a designation was unnecessary given the comparatively small size of the Conservation Area and its setting at the heart of a broader developed village.

3.3.3 **ACTION:** *The Council will seek to ensure that significant views into and out from the Conservation Area 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.*

### 3.4 Amenity space

3.4.1 Wheaton Aston 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 Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council and Staffordshire County Council to ensure that the open spaces are well maintained and enhanced, as appropriate.*

### 3.5 Public realm

3.5.1 The character appraisal has identified that some street furniture, such as litter bins and streetlights may be in need of replacement. Any replacement features in the public realm should respect the historic rural location.

3.5.2 **ACTION:** *The Council will continue to work with other agencies such as Lapley, Stretton & Wheaton Aston Parish Council and Staffordshire County Council to ensure that any new public realm schemes will, as far as possible, enhance the character of the Conservation Area.*

## 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 Wheaton Aston Conservation Area, important trees and green spaces are indicated on the Townscape Appraisal Map (see pp. 22-23); 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 Wheaton Aston'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 Wheaton Aston 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 Wheaton Aston Conservation Area.*

### **3.9 Buildings at Risk/ Urgent Works Notices**

3.9.1 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: Wheaton Aston Conservation Area Appraisal

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# 1. Summary

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

- A historic rural village focused around a small church encircled by winding lanes that surround a small village green or square at the centre;
- A well preserved example of an historic medieval village core;
- Historic buildings and other structures, with four listed examples in the Conservation Area, including a church, a 17th century timber framed cottage and two early 19th century farmhouses;
- Domestically scaled historic and modern buildings, generally set in small plots clustered around the village church;
- A topography that gives only limited views over the neighbouring countryside, which reinforces the intimate character of this rural nucleated settlement;
- Historic boundaries including sandstone walling, red brick walling and ornate cast iron railings;
- Some modern development interspersed with the historic buildings and a large amount of modern residential housing on the fringes;
- Focal points provided by the church (Grade II\* listed), the village square, the supermarket and the village hall, which act as the hubs of commercial and social activity;
- A strong use of the colour 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;
- Notable absence of trees for a rural settlement.



## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 The Wheaton Aston Conservation Area

2.1.1 Staffordshire County Council designated the Wheaton Aston Conservation Area on 20th November 1978. The Conservation Area covers the historic core of Wheaton Aston around St Mary's Church and the small village green or square, stretching a short distance in each direction to form a relatively self contained area that includes a number of historic buildings.

2.1.2 Wheaton Aston is a rural village that is historically linked with the neighbouring village of Lapley. The two villages fall under the jurisdiction of a joint parish council and Wheaton Aston contains the majority of residential houses and shops in the area, while Lapley has the Parish Church, Manor House and other more prestigious historic houses.

2.1.3 Due to the existence of shops, an absence of trees and the more intensive modern development in Wheaton Aston, this Conservation Area has a more active and less rural appearance than at Lapley, although it is similarly set within Staffordshire countryside. The considerable residential development that has taken place on new roads surrounding the Conservation Area since the 1960s, particularly to the north, has introduced a more suburban appearance to Wheaton Aston and views through to the open countryside and rural canal side that surrounds the settlement are limited.

2.1.4 In the 21st century, the central historic core is formed by an open space tightly contained by the modern development all around it. The village lanes retain their historic layout and their winding narrow courses give a hint of the settlement's former rural charm.

### 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 Wheaton Aston 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 Wheaton Aston 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, historic shop fronts, views and areas and buildings for enhancement were noted amongst other matters and recorded on a Townscape Appraisal Map (see pp. 22-23). 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 Wheaton Aston 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 41 confirms that the following policies apply to the Wheaton Aston 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 Wheaton Aston is located to the north of Wolverhampton, about six miles to the west of Penkridge and four miles north of Brewood, and is surrounded by other rural Staffordshire villages and hamlets including Lapley, Stretton, Marston and Brockhurst.

3.1.2 The village is in a rural setting although there is a considerable buffer of modern housing around the Conservation Area, particularly to the north and west. Most of the houses in the Conservation Area are clustered along a small network of roads around St Mary's Church to the south of High Street. No major trunk roads run through or around the village although Watling Street (A5) is located about two miles to the south.

3.1.3 High Street, which runs through the centre of the village, connects with Ivetsey Road and provides an alternative route to Penkridge and smaller villages from the A5 (Watling Street). The location close to the industrialised West Midlands and the proximity next to Shropshire Union Canal has cemented Wheaton Aston's position as the principal centre of population in the parish by stimulating the continued growth of the village as the main residential and community hub of the parish.

3.1.4 Activities in the village are mainly related to the everyday needs of the local population. There is a church, a supermarket, two public houses, a post office, a first school and a village hall. A number of shops and other facilities, such as the original primary school, have closed in recent years and the empty buildings on High Street give a redundant air to the village. The supermarket opposite the church in Frog Lane encourages a steady pace of activity, which also brings an increase to the level of motor traffic at this location.

### 3.2 Topography & geology

3.2.1 Wheaton Aston stands on level ground, although the church is on a slightly raised area. Due to the lack of hilly terrain and the fairly dense placement of buildings around the small green in front of the church, as well as a number of tall red brick boundary walls and high hedges, there are few extensive views out of the centre of the Conservation



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Wheaton Aston sits in a rural setting with open countryside around
- The High Street acts as a central spine through Wheaton Aston
- Boundary walls are a very prominent feature of Wheaton Aston, such as these in Frog Lane

Area. For this reason Wheaton Aston has much less of the spacious rural appearance of many of the other villages in the district, such as neighbouring Lapley.

3.2.2 The level aspect of the village results in one fairly long view out of the Conservation Area, along Long Street. However, the topography drops slightly to the south east as School Road winds out of the settlement, giving a small indication of the village's former rural appearance with views past some mature trees on the edge of the lane, through to some dilapidated farm buildings outside the Conservation Area boundary.

3.2.3 The village soil is a gravelly loam that sits on a bed of sand. The surrounding countryside has a mixture of soils, including light and mixed loams and clay. Historically, marl pits in each field 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 church. The church itself was constructed of sandstone like the medieval chapel that previously stood on the same site. The clay in the soil led to the creation of clay pits around the village, all of which are now disused, but which 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 Post-war housing encircles the Wheaton Aston Conservation Area on all sides, although this is most extensive to the north and west. Beyond the housing there are views across the surrounding countryside in all directions and there are a number of interesting landmarks within the wider landscape.

3.3.2 To the north, beyond the village of Marston is the disused Wheaton Aston Aerodrome, now used for pig farming. To the west is fairly continuous farmland dotted with small villages and hamlets such as Blymhill and Brineton. To the south, the straight course of the Roman Watling Street cuts through the country side and beyond that is the Belvide Reservoir, an important local



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Church of St Mary
- Modern development just outside the Conservation Area
- The remains of Wheaton Aston airfield

natural habitat which is a designated local nature reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

3.3.3 The reservoir is an important part of the Shropshire Union Canal (a series of reservoirs and feeders being crucial to the smooth running of all canal networks), which flows northwards from Wolverhampton through Brewood and skirts the eastern boundary of Wheaton Aston on its way up to Ellesmere Port in Cheshire. The canal is an important landscape feature in the wider setting of the Conservation Area, delineating a visual boundary from the sister settlement of Lapley and providing an important communication and transport link with the rest of the West Midlands since the end of the 1830s.

3.3.4 Small hamlets and villages lie scattered across the Staffordshire countryside on all sides of Wheaton Aston. The intrusion of modern infrastructure on this rural scene is minimal and the closest major routes are Watling Street to the south and the A449 and M6 to the east, none of which have any visual or aural affect on the Conservation Area.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- A view of and through Bridge No.18 on the Shropshire Union Canal at Wheaton Aston
- Wheaton Aston has little modern infrastructure and where this exists it has been well executed

## 4. Historic development & archaeology

### 4.1 Historic development

4.1.1 Wheaton Aston has early origins as a farming community consisting of farmhouses, a small chapel and cottages. The Earls of Mercia held it until 1061 when as part of the land surrounding the Manor of Lapley it was given to a Priory of Black Monks from the Benedictine Abbey of St Remigus at Rhiems. The name Wheaton Aston most probably derives from the wheat that was historically grown in the area although the village was first known as Estone, which later changed to Aston.

4.1.2 In 1086 Wheaton Aston was probably part of the manor of Lapley, recorded in Domesday as 'Lepelie'. Lapley Manor 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 in Lapley. However, the neighbouring settlement of Aston was from early medieval times the main population centre and there is a reference to a manor of Aston in 1292 when it was granted a market and annual fair. Aston became subsumed in to Lapley Manor a year later. A chapel, later dedicated to All Saints, was built in Wheaton Aston before 1318.

4.1.3 In 1338 'Whetenaston' had three times as many tenants as the village of Lapley as well as the only local water mill. Yet from this time until the 19th century it remained a secondary part of the joint holding of the Lapley and Aston Manor. The principal building referred to in Wheaton Aston in early medieval times was Le Mote, which was probably on the site of the earthworks at Brooke House Farm to the south-east of the village.

4.1.4 Wheaton Aston remained a farming settlement and some buildings have survived in the village from the late medieval era. These include a number of individual houses and farmhouses many of which, such as The Ramblers, an early 16th century cross passage house, stand just outside the Conservation Area. Some buildings, such as the Post Office Cottages, which were built circa 1500 and stood within the Conservation Area, have been demolished since the original designation in 1978. The principal crop grown was wheat, although a considerable amount of hay was also produced in Wheaton Aston. The village also became known for its itinerant timber fellers.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- John Speed's map of Wheaton Aston, 1610
- Church Farmhouse stands as testimony to Wheaton Aston's history as a farming settlement
- The Ramblers, Wheaton Aston

4.1.5 By 1680 the village contained 100 houses although in 1777, fire ravaged the village and 19 thatched cottages and 16 outbuildings to the southwest of the Chapel of All Saints were destroyed. Subsequently, cottages and houses in Wheaton Aston were finished with clay tile roofs and the main structures were more usually encased in brick.

4.1.6 In the 18th and 19th century, Wheaton Aston and Lapley 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 was replaced by a National School in 1853. St Mary's School, which lies just outside the Conservation Area, was extended in 1898 and 1912, eventually accommodating 130 children. It served the community and outlying villages until 1994 when the school was relocated.

4.1.7 Other buildings were also constructed for the use of the local community in the 19th century, mostly clustered around the chapel and included reading rooms, a lock up and the parish workhouse. None of these structures survive today.

4.1.8 Wheaton Aston also provided much as the agricultural labour in the area and there was a small wooden windmill on Mill Lane to the south of the chapel from the 18th century. The fields around the village were split into strip holdings until 1846, by which time most of them had been consolidated into enclosed fields. By 1851 the population in Wheaton Aston was 953, a considerable size for a rural farming community. The population of the village may well have grown with the completion of the Birmingham and Liverpool Junction Canal (later called the Shropshire Union Canal) in 1835. This development brought greater transport and communication links to Wheaton Aston.

4.1.9 The Chapel of All Saints was a chapel of ease to Lapley by 1817. In the early 19th century the non-conformist movement became popular in Wheaton Aston and led to the construction of other new chapels. A Zion Chapel opened in 1815, situated outside the Conservation Area, and in 1832 a Primitive Methodist Chapel was built close to the Chapel of All Saints. A larger chapel on the other side of the road replaced the chapel, now



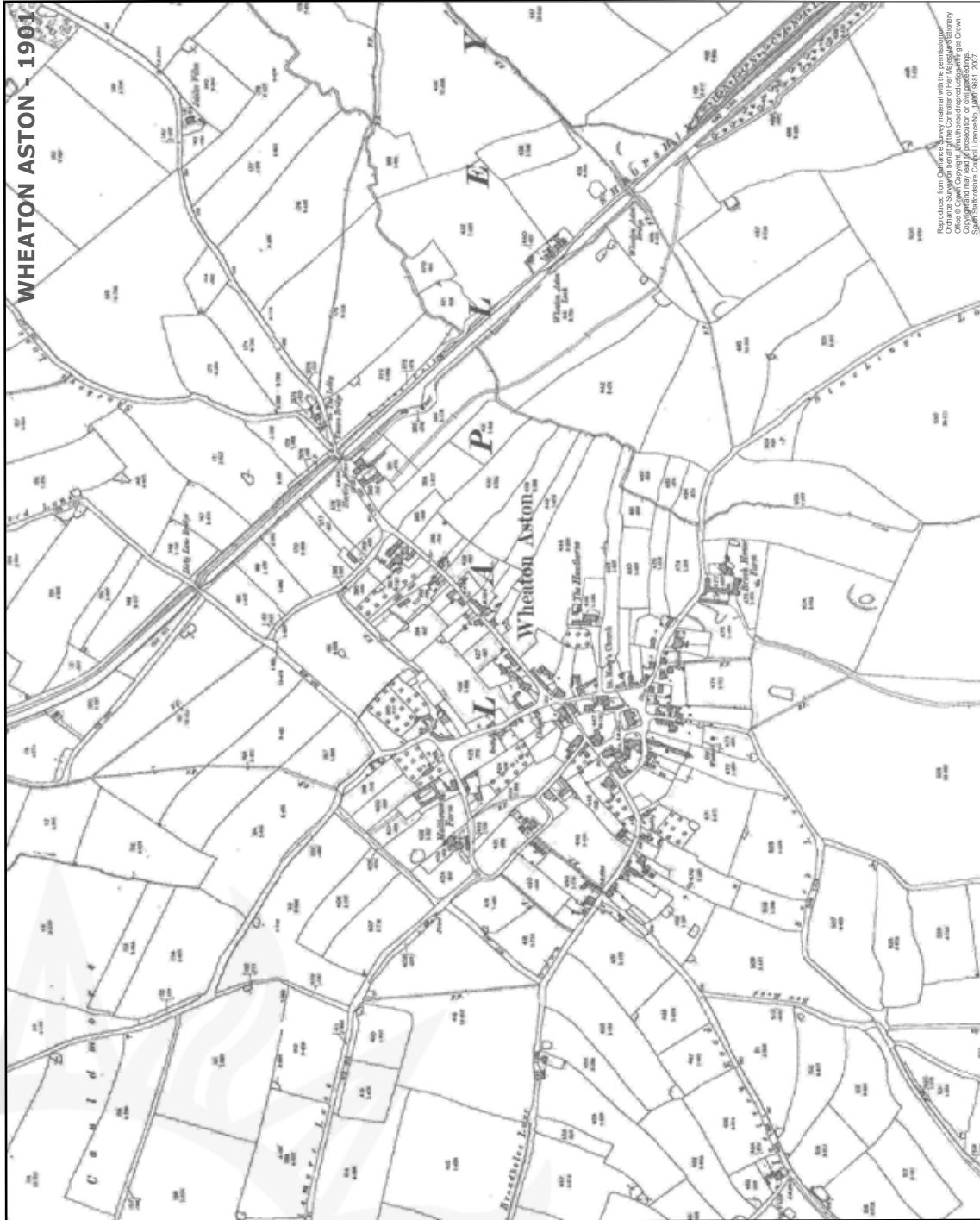
#### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Chapel of All Saints, Wheaton Aston
- St Mary's School, which closed in 1994
- The remains of Wheaton Aston windmill in 1912



**Image**

- Wheaton Aston - Ordnance Survey Map 1880

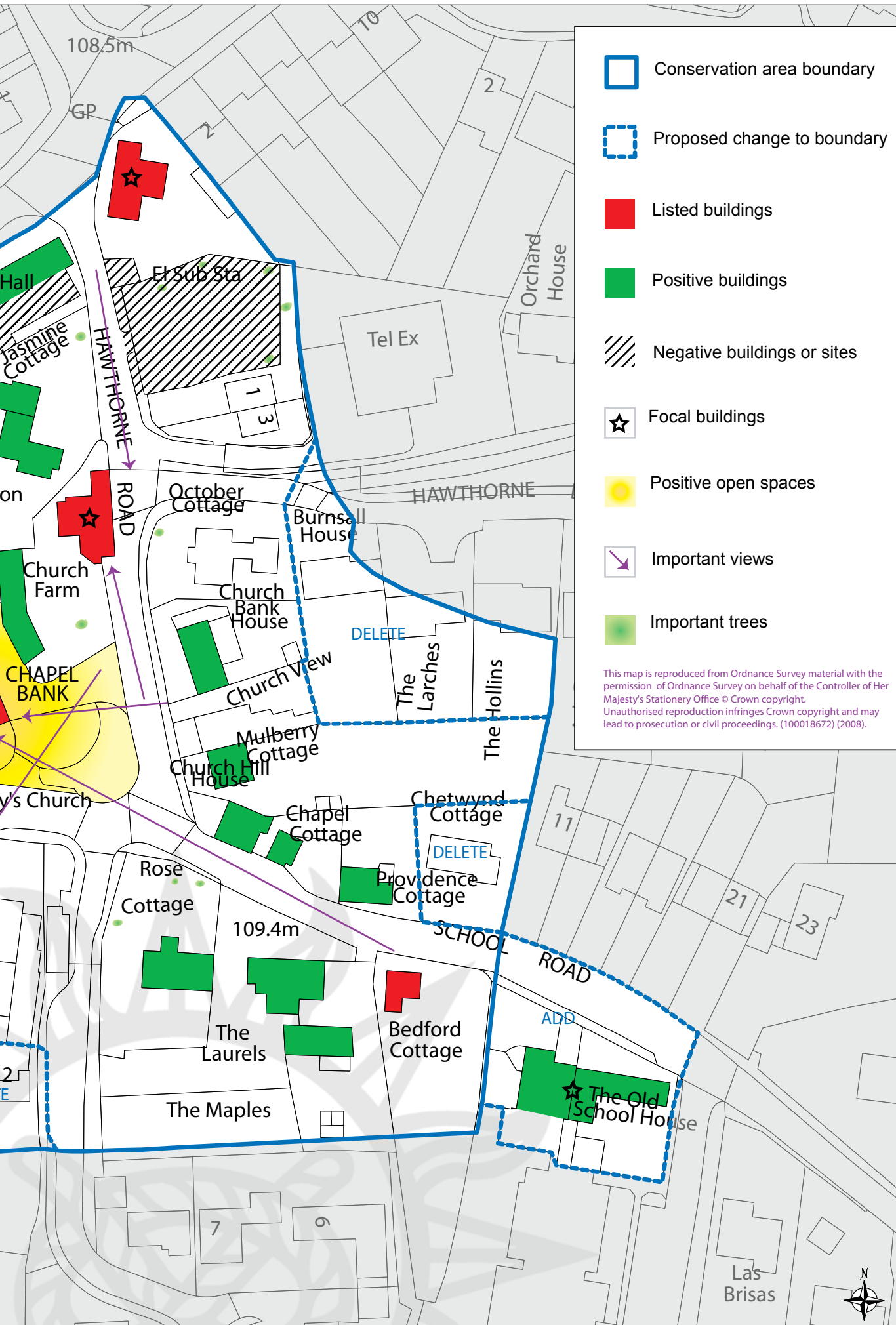


**Image**

- Wheaton Aston - Ordnance Survey Map 1901

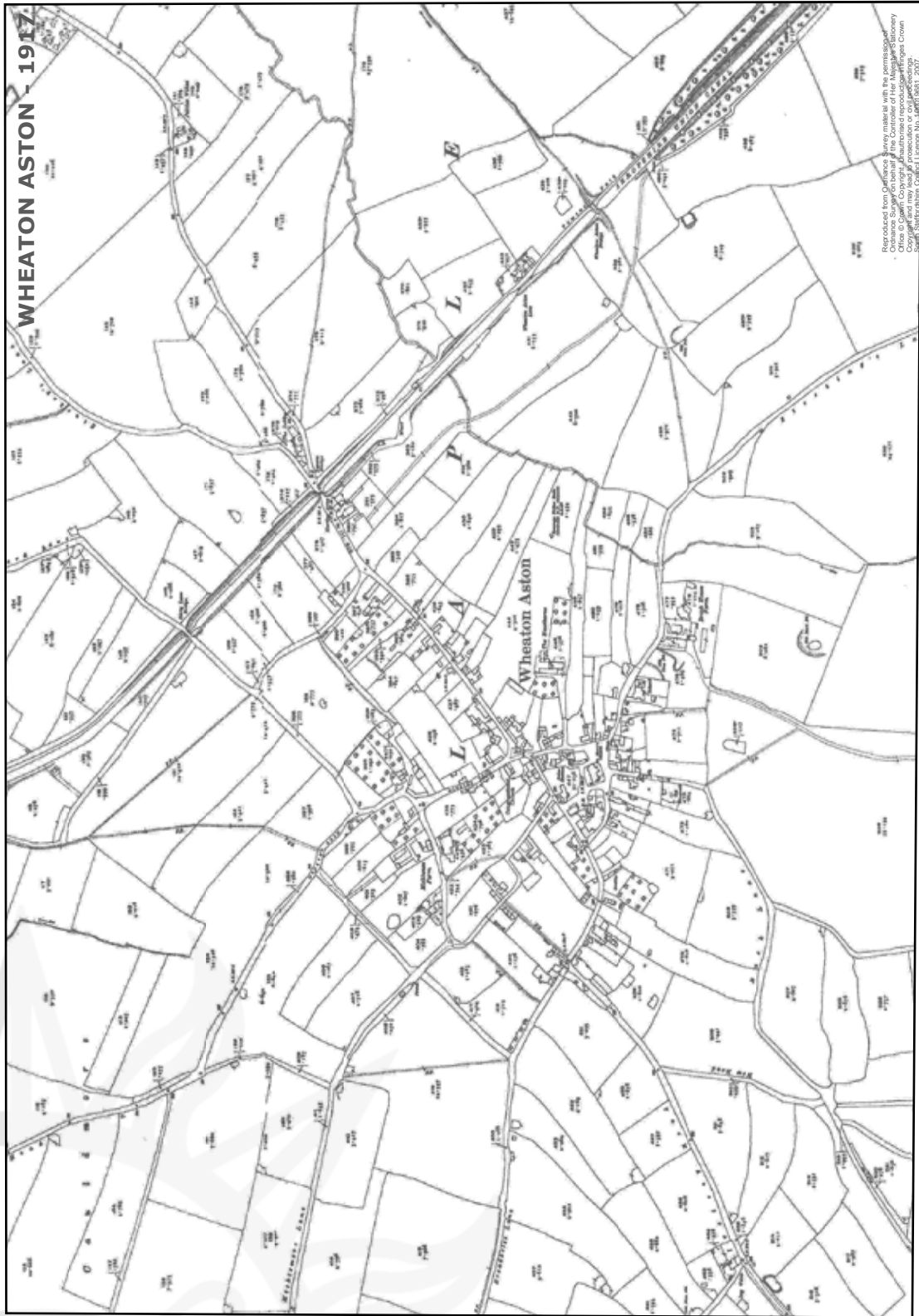






- Conservation area boundary
- Proposed change to boundary
- Listed buildings
- Positive buildings
- Negative buildings or sites
- ★ Focal buildings
- Positive open spaces
- Important views
- Important trees

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**Image**

- Wheaton Aston - Ordnance Survey Map 1917

Chapel Cottage in School Road. The site of the new chapel was facing The Square in front of Rose Cottage and the location is still marked by the original name and date stone.

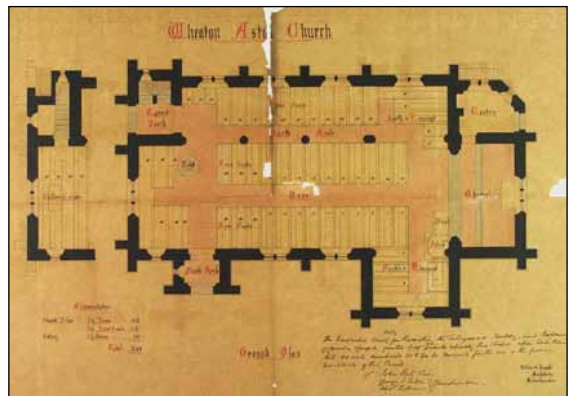
4.1.10 The increasing popularity of non-conformism led to falling attendances at some churches and led to them falling into a state of disrepair, such as All Saints' Church in Lapley. In 1857 the medieval chapel was demolished and St Mary's Church was built on the site, to designs by Bidlake and Lovatt. The Methodist chapel was demolished in 1971.

4.1.11 The 1880 Ordnance Survey map shows all of the key historic buildings in Wheaton Aston, and the church, chapels, school and public houses are marked, along with the disused windmill to the south of the church. The distinct island site of the church and the irregular square area to its east are also clearly shown. The surrounding countryside is divided into small fields and strips of land, heavily populated by trees and with a scattering of smithies and brick kilns.

4.1.12 The 1901 and 1917 maps show that very little of the built form changed in Wheaton Aston over the next 40 years although a number of properties appear to have been extended, notably The Coach and Horses Hotel. Additional structures resulted in further encroachment on this already fairly densely packed nucleated settlement. The absence of street and field boundary trees from these surveys gives clearer indications of the built form in Wheaton Aston at this time.

4.1.13 By 1940 Wheaton Aston contained two thirds of the parish population although the village did not grow significantly until after World War 2, when mains sewage was introduced. Some parts of the surrounding countryside changed in the meantime, notably to the north where Wheaton Aston Aerodrome opened in 1941 to train foreign pilots. It closed in 1947 and subsequently housed a large number of Polish nationals until they were re-housed elsewhere by the 1960s.

4.1.14 In the 1960s the new sewerage system was introduced and this, along with the completion of the M6 to Junction 12 in 1968, led to the rapid expansion of the village to its present size of



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Wheaton Aston Primitive Methodist Chapel
- Bidlake & Lovatt's plan for the Church of St Mary, Wheaton Aston
- Wheaton Aston lock and tollhouse on the Shropshire Union Canal
- Remains of the Control Tower at the former Wheaton Aston airfield

approximately 800 houses. With the advent of the new motorway network, Wheaton Aston was brought within 30 minutes of the West Midlands Conurbation by car and the transformation of the village from agricultural community to commuter settlement was completed by the 1980s. In 1994 the First School moved to new premises in Marston Road and the centre of the village lost some of its day-to-day activity.

## 4.2 Archaeology

4.2.1 There are 18 records on Staffordshire County Historic Environment Record for Wheaton Aston and its immediate surroundings. These include the site of the medieval chapel, the timber framed Mill House, the site of the 18th century windmill, medieval enclosures around Le Mote, medieval ridge and furrow field patterns, the site of a 14th century aisled hall (Post Office Cottages, demolished 1982), the Shropshire Union Canal and listed buildings descriptions.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Mill House, Wheaton Aston
- Post Office Cottages, demolished in 1982

## 5. Spatial analysis

### 5.1 Plan, form & layout

5.1.1 Wheaton Aston is a nucleated village focused around the church (formerly a chapel) and village square featuring a small green with lanes radiating from it. The lanes continue to branch out into the surrounding fields and many of these field tracks lead to farmland. Ridge and furrow marks around the village suggest that strip farming in the area dates back to at least medieval times.

5.1.2 The core of the village consists of the winding narrow lanes of Frog Lane, Mill Lane, School Road, Hawthorne Road and The Cobbles. Further footpaths, including Church Bank, run through the central square, a part paved and part grass open space which runs around the church connecting with The Cobbles in the west. To the north, the principal road of High Street is comparatively wide and straight and passes the end of Frog Lane and Hawthorne Road, at which point it becomes Long Street and continues out of the Conservation Area towards the canal and Lapley beyond.

5.1.3 To the west and south of the church, buildings line the lanes in a fairly formal arrangement and follow the contours of the roads. However, the irregular shape of the square itself, the Church Farm buildings to the north and the church to the west create an informal arrangement of buildings of different ages, styles and forms as well as a distinct area of open space.

5.1.4 Away from the square, the lanes twist in each direction, noticeably narrower than the spacious open area of the square. Northwards to the west of the church, The Cobbles winds past the modern houses on the site of the old parish workhouse and past the back gardens, outbuildings and garages of High Street properties. Frog Lane curves past 19th century cottages and has a distinctive tall red brick wall on the north side before opening out onto High Street next to The Coach & Horses Hotel. School Road has individual cottages set back from the roadside on its south side and smaller cottages on the road edge to the north as it leads down to the former schoolhouse.

5.1.5 On the northern perimeter of the Conservation Area, High Street and Long Street have a mixture of detached buildings, including an



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Church of St Mary, Wheaton Aston
- Frog Lane with its twists, turns and high red brick walls
- The Coach & Horses Inn, High Street, Wheaton Aston

historic inn, village hall and modern houses. These roads also feature modern pavements, which are noticeable in their absence from the rural core of the Conservation Area to the south.

## 5.2 Landmarks, focal points & views

5.2.1 The landmark buildings, as identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map [see pp. 22-23], provide focal points within the Conservation Area through their position as individual or corner buildings and their striking architecture. These are St Mary's Church, Main Farmhouse (Long Street), Church Farmhouse, The Coach and Horses Hotel and The Old School House (currently outside the designated area).

5.2.2 St Mary's Church is the most important landmark in Wheaton Aston, dominating the open space of the square, which lies next to it. However, for a 19th century place of worship, it is relatively modest in scale and the rich red sandstone walls and tiled roof featuring scalloped tiles fills the street scene without overshadowing it.

5.2.3 Next to the church, the open space of Chapel Bank, formerly The Square is the principal focal point in the Conservation Area. It marks the meeting point of Frog Lane, Hawthorne Road and School Road and is close to the main village shop, as well as the only amenity space in this part of the village.

5.2.4 Two farm buildings, Church Farmhouse and Main Farmhouse, have a significant impact on the streetscape and therefore have been identified as landmark buildings. They are both Grade II listed and have fine brick frontages standing close to, or directly on, the edge of Hawthorne Road. The structures help bring a sense of containment to the Conservation Area as well as having attractive individual architectural features.

5.2.5 The Coach & Horses Hotel is the other landmark building in the Conservation Area. This red brick 19th century coaching inn features handsome historic details and a traditional carriage arch and is a prominent corner building at the western gateway to the historic centre of Wheaton Aston.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Church of St Mary is a landmark building in Wheaton Aston
- The Square in Wheaton Aston was formed to celebrate the Millennium in 2000
- Church Farmhouse in Hawthorne Lane

5.2.6 The Old School House is not within the Conservation Area boundary but is an historic building, much extended, which makes a considerable impact on the street scene and marks the southern gateway to the Conservation Area.

5.2.7 The views in and out of the Conservation Area are limited by the topography and the dense placement of buildings. The principal long view out of the designated area is along Long Street while there are some significant shorter views within the Conservation Area, notably from Bedford Cottage to the church.

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. 22-23].

### 5.3 Open spaces, trees & landscape

5.3.1 The principal open space in the Conservation Area is the square to the east of the church. The tightness of the built form around the square, and the breadth of the roads that surround it, accentuate the visual impact of the open space in the centre of the Conservation Area. There is also a small amount of open space outside the supermarket opposite the small green, which adds to the openness of the area to the south and east of the church.

5.3.2 The central green is landscaped with rows of concrete setts lining the small, grassed area and a paved seating area to the north. The open area continues north and west around the church in the form of a wide footpath known as Chapel Bank and opens out to the north of the church into The Cobbles. This northern section is more sheltered than the open grassed area and is overshadowed by the church and some mature tree specimens. The grassed area features some young trees and shrubbery.

5.3.3 The small forecourt to the supermarket is not enhanced with any landscaping, features a poured concrete treatment and is frequently used for car parking.

5.3.4 There are no other open spaces within the Conservation Area.



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Looking towards the Church from opposite Bedford Cottage
- The square to the east of the church is the principal open space in the Conservation Area
- Open space outside the village supermarket



5.3.5 Trees make a modest contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and some mature specimens stand to the north of the church. Other individual trees stand in gardens and are often visible from the highway. Important trees are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map [see pp. 22-23].

## 5.4 Public realm

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

### 5.4.2 *Paving:*

Modern pavements of concrete paviours or block work and concrete kerbing line High Street and Long Street, although a traditional treatment of diamond setts remains outside The Coach and Horses Hotel and the disused building opposite. There is also some paving on the east side of Hawthorne Road, on School Lane and the north side of Frog Lane next to the church. Wider areas of pavement are to be found in Chapel Bank to the east and north of the church. These feature soft-toned concrete block work laid in geometric patterns and in some areas is laid next to traditional style blue bricks. By the seating area to the east of the church a mosaic has been laid in pavement.

Many of the lanes are narrow and do not have space to allow for pavements. This restriction has helped retain some of the traditional rural character of the village. However, some sections of wider roads, such as outside the supermarket and Fair View Court and the southern half of Hawthorne Road have pavements that make use of the mellow coloured concrete blocks found in the square and wide 'conservation' kerbing.

### 5.4.2 *Street lighting:*

Streetlights are positioned in key parts of the Conservation Area, predominantly around the square east of the church and along High Street.

In the square and south of the church there are tall steel standards with overhanging lanterns. To the south at the entrance to Fair View Court there is a smaller standard with an upright lantern style lamp.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Staffordshire Blue diamond paving bricks outside The Coach & Horses Hotel
- Examples of the mix of streetlighting to be found in Wheaton Aston
- Wheaton Aston's predominantly modern street furniture includes its bus shelters

Scattered around the rest of the Conservation Area are 1960s 'hockey-stick' style concrete and steel lamp-standards.

#### 5.4.3 **Street signs:**

The street signs in the Conservation Area are modern and fixed to the pavement on steel supports or directly onto boundary walls. Some of these, such as at the corner of Long Street and Hawthorne Road, have a traditional style with black lettering on white backgrounds although the newer signs, such as at the entrance to Fair View Court feature non-traditional colours such as green backgrounds.

The most distinctive directional sign in the Conservation Area is the black and white painted timber finger post on the corner of Long Street, just outside the designated boundary. The only modern highway sign in the Conservation Area is a Give Way sign on the approach to High Street from Hawthorne Road.

#### 5.4.4 **Other features:**

- Chunky timber benches, circular planters and guardrails around bedding areas line the seating area in the square. Squat timber bollards are also fixed around the areas to prohibit car parking. Bollards stand at either end of the pathway to the north of the church, which leads to The Cobbles in the west.
- Two tall steel poles and steel gates are fixed to the back of the pavement outside the surface car park to the north of No.1 Hawthorne Road.
- A modern electricity substation at the top of Hawthorne Road.
- There are blue litter bins attached to highway sign poles at various locations, of a standard design found across the South Staffordshire District. There are some black plastic freestanding bins in the square.



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

- The timber finger post on the corner of Long Street, just outside the Conservation Area
- Bollards at both ends of the pathway to the north of 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 and former farmhouses with outbuildings. A small number of modern residential houses are interspersed between the historic buildings on High Street and The Cobbles, while the majority of post-war construction in Wheaton Aston has taken place to the north, outside the Conservation Area boundary.

6.1.2 Other building types include places of worship (St Mary's Church and Chapel Cottage), a village hall 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 South Staffordshire Local Plan, adopted in December 1996.

6.2.2 There are four listed buildings or structures in the Wheaton Aston Conservation Area. They are all listed Grade II, apart from the Church of St Mary which is Grade II\*:

- St Mary's Church was built on the site of the medieval Chapel of All Saints in 1857 to the designs of Bidlake & Lovatt. It is built of red and white sandstone and is of modest proportions in a style that is reminiscent of the earlier chapel;
- Main Farmhouse is a 17th century building with a 19th century frontage. The building commands a prominent position on the corner of Hawthorne Road and Long Street and is a striking two storey red brick structure with a white painted front elevation. The 17th century part of the building is a timber framed rear wing that faces Long Street;
- Church Farmhouse is another red brick farmhouse, built in the early 19th century with stone dressings and lavish details including sash windows and keystones and an historic door and door case. An attractive feature is the dainty black painted wrought iron railings that



### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Church of St Mary, Wheaton Aston
- Main Farmhouse, centre left
- Church Farmhouse, Hawthorne Road

run along the elevation facing Hawthorne Road;

- Bedford Cottage is a late 17th century timber framed house. The petite two-storey, two-bay structure stands in a generous plot and was once part of a large house.

6.2.3 A number of other listed buildings, mainly 16th and 17th century farmhouses and cottages, stand in other parts of Wheaton Aston, outside the Conservation Area.

### 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.



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

- Bedford Cottage
- Church Bank House
- Mill House, Mill Lane

6.3.3 As a result of the extensive survey carried out for this character appraisal, the following buildings in Wheaton Aston are being proposed for inclusion on the Local List:

#### Grade B

- High Street: The Coach & Horses Hotel
- Hawthorne Road: Jasmine Cottage, Church Bank House
- School Road: Chapel Cottage, Providence Cottage, Rose Cottage, The Old School House (not in the Conservation Area)
- Mill Lane: Mill House.

#### Grade C

- High Street: Wheaton Aston Village Hall
- Mill Lane: Jacaranda House.

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.



### Images from Top to Bottom

- The Coach & Horses Hotel, High Street
- Jasmine Cottage, Hawthorne Road
- Wheaton Aston Village Hall

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

6.4.3 The positive buildings are:

Public Houses

- The Coach and Horses Hotel

Former chapels, farm and mill buildings

- Chapel Cottage, Rose Cottage, The Maples, Church Farm outbuildings,
- Mill House,

Early houses or cottages

- Providence Cottage, The Laurels, Church Hill House, Mulberry Cottage, Holmcroft, Leabank House, Chapel House, Jacaranda House, Bank House, Jasmine Cottage

Individual buildings

- Wheaton Aston Village Hall

## 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).



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Chapel Cottage
- Rose Cottage
- Providence Cottage - an example of an early cottage

This sets out a series of 10 questions regarding the characteristics of unlisted buildings in a conservation area. Whereas a positive answer to any one of these can provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area, by deduction, a building or site which fails to score any positive answers to the same questions can be regarded as detracting from the overall character and integrity of a conservation area and therefore to be having a negative impact upon it.

6.5.3 The negative buildings and sites identified in Wheaton Aston are: -

- The Cobbles: No.1
- Frog Lane: No.1
- Hawthorne Road: The surface car park;
- High Street: Rear extension of Wheaton Aston Village Hall;

These are indicated on the Townscape Appraisal Map by cross-hatching [see pp. 22-23].

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 Bedford Cottage is the only remaining building in the Conservation Area that is clearly constructed using timber frame methods. Traditionally timber-framed buildings had either wattle and daub or lime plaster infill panels, but



### Images from Top to Bottom

- Bedford Cottage, now much extended
- The surface car park, Hawthorne Lane
- Wheaton Aston Village Hall

Bedford Cottage has later brick infill panels. Other timber-framed structures such as the rear wing of Main Farmhouse are also visible in the Conservation Area, while other buildings including Mill House have historic structures hidden within later brick casings.

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

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

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



#### Images from Top to Bottom

- Church Farm Barn's construction is typical of 19th c building styles in Wheaton Aston
- Brick walls are a commonly found boundary treatment in Wheaton Aston



# 7. Character analysis

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

7.2 **Key positives:**

- Rural location and qualities with former farm buildings, winding narrow lanes, a small village green or square;
- St Mary’s Church, Grade II\* listed and a fine example of mid 19th century architecture;
- A number of historic buildings, most notably Church Farm House and Bedford Cottage;
- The tight clustering of small cottages and large farm houses around the church as an example of an historic nucleated settlement
- Minimal intrusion of unsuitable modern additions to the street scene such as modern bus shelters and pavements;
- Minimal introduction of materials, such as uPVC windows, in the Conservation Area’s historic buildings which could erode its character;
- 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 coaching inn providing a landmark entrance to the village from the west;
- Characterful outbuildings to farmhouses;
- Sandstone, brick walls and cast iron railings;
- Ornate cast iron railings atop the low wall of Wheaton Aston Lodge that run along Park Lane;
- Ample amenity space in the square;
- Groups of mature trees north of the church.

7.3 **Key negatives:**

- The appearance of some of the modern buildings in the Conservation Area which have no special interest, as identified in Section 6.5;
- The appearance of the façade and forecourt of the supermarket;
- The appearance of parked cars around the supermarket;
- The need for maintenance and restoration of Forge House and Cuttlestone House;
- Vacant shops on the north side of High Street, outside the Conservation Area;
- Some of the public realm, such as litterbins and some of the street lighting, needs updating.



**Images from Top to Bottom**

- The tight clustering of cottages around the village centre is a feature of Wheaton Aston
- The carriage archway through the Coach & Horses Hotel - a village landmark
- Parked cars around the village supermarket

# 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 Wheaton Aston Conservation Area:

- Maintenance of the rural character;
- Need to improve the car parking arrangements around the church;
- Need to carry out public realm improvements (mainly in High Street);
- Use of modern materials and details on historic buildings;
- Need for full Local List assessment;
- Need for a revision of the Conservation Area boundary

## 8.2 Conservation Area boundary review:

8.2.1 A number of boundary deletions and one addition would improve the extent to which the designation accurately reflects the special character of Wheaton Aston:

8.2.2 Proposed additions:

- The Old School House, School Road.

8.2.3 Proposed deletions:

- Off High Street: Coach Gardens;
- Off Frog Lane: Barn Cottage and Gander Cottage;
- Nos. 1 and 2 Windmill Cottages;
- Off Hawthorne Drive: Burnsall House, The Larches and The Hollies;
- Providence Cottage, School Road.

## 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

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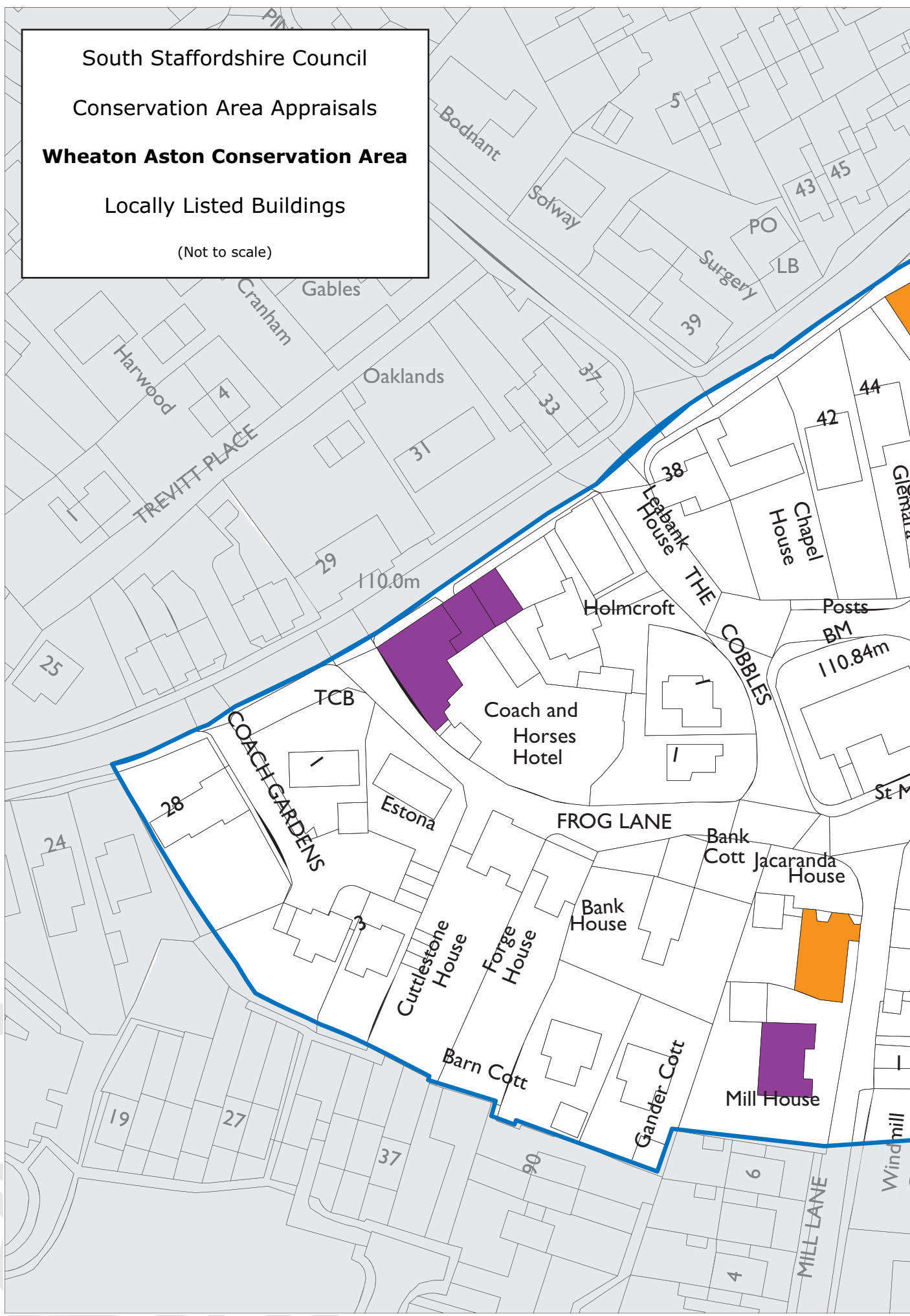
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# Notes

Appendix 5: Locally Listed Buildings Map (overleaf)

South Staffordshire Council  
Conservation Area Appraisals  
**Wheaton Aston Conservation Area**  
Locally Listed Buildings  
(Not to scale)









**Wheaton Aston Conservation Area Management Plan  
Adopted 11 November 2010**



**South Staffordshire Council**