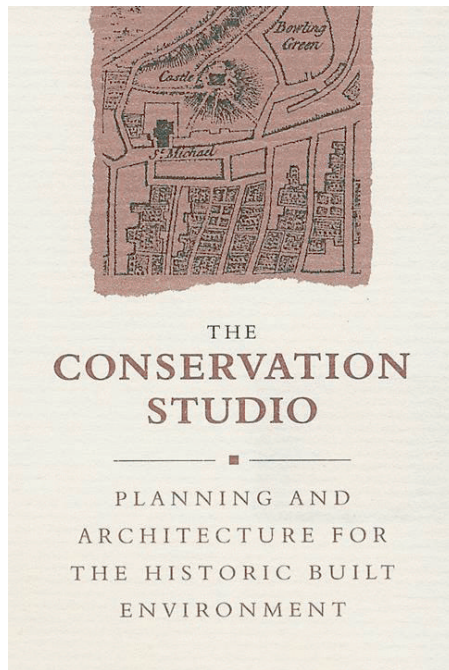


Stone Conservation Area Character Appraisal: Adopted 2 October 2008



Foreword

Foreword

On 2nd October 2008 Stafford Borough Council resolved to:-

- 1) adopt this document as a formal Council document to be used as a material planning consideration**
- 2) designate the revised boundary to the Stone Conservation Area as set out in this document.**

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2 Summary of Special Interest

2 Summary of Special Interest

2.1 The special interest that justifies the designation of the Stone Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historical and environmental factors including;

- Location in the valley of the River Trent midway between the Potteries and Stafford and approximately in the middle of the 93 mile long Trent and Mersey Canal;
- The growth of the town is probably attributable to the establishment of an Augustinian Priory in the 10th century (dissolved in the 16th century);
- Historic market town (market charter granted in 1251) which still retains much of its 18th and 19th century character;
- The architectural and historic quality of the area's historic buildings, 62 of which are listed and many others make a positive contribution to historic character and appearance;

Picture 2.1 The Crown Hotel, High Street



- Variety of building types with many good examples of religious, commercial and residential buildings together with a coaching hotel (1778), former workhouse building (1793), corn mill on Scotch Brook (c.1795), railway station (1848), market hall (1868) and brewery warehouse (1881);
- Variety of house types ranging from a prestigious 18th century town house (Cumberland House) to late 19th century artisans' terraced houses in Alma Street;
- Prevalence of red brick with clay tiles although stucco, slate and sandstone are in evidence;
- Three urban public spaces: The Market Place overlooked by the former Market Hall (1868), now refurbished as the town's library; Granville Square which was a focal point for meetings in the past and today accommodates a war memorial and mature plane tree; Earl St Vincent Square, a modern public space created by the realignment of Stafford Street in the 1990s;
- Vestiges of former 19th century shoemaking workshops and factories accessed by alleys from the High Street;
- The Trent and Mersey Canal and associated barge locks, blacksmith's shop, mechanics' workshop, canal warehouses and dry docks;

Summary of Special Interest 2

- Notable places of worship, Anglican, Catholic and Non-Conformist: St Michael's and St Wulfrud's Church (1753-8); Catholic Chapel of St Anne (1844) and Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception and St Dominic (1852); Church of St John (1870) and Christchurch (1887);
- Well preserved 19th century western residential area, mainly terraced, including railway station, school, church and former co-op stores and whose residential properties have the added protection of an Article 4 Direction;
- Individual trees and groups of trees notably those in the churchyards of Christchurch and St Michael's and mature street trees (e.g. Kings Avenue, Station Road);
- Small historic items such as milestones, historic brick paving, ornate gateposts, iron street name signs, and lamp snuffer.

**Picture 2.2 Building at Risk: Former Malthouse
Adie's Alley**



Key Issues

- Preventing further loss of architectural detail;
- Adoption of a 'local list';
- Conservation area boundary review;
- Tree management;
- Garish shopfronts;
- Opportunity sites;
- Links between canal and town centre;
- Small number of vacant shops in town centre;

More detailed references to specific buildings and sites is given in 9 'Issues'.

3 Introduction

3 Introduction

Background

3.1 The Stone Conservation Area was designated in 1967 by Staffordshire County Council. The boundary was reviewed and amended in 1987 and again in 1996 in which year an Article 4 Direction was served on residential properties in the northern quarter of the area.

3.2 This Conservation Area Appraisal has been written by The Conservation Studio on behalf of Stafford Borough Council. It was prepared in the autumn of 2007 and was followed by a process of community engagement, which informed the content of this document. This Character Appraisal, with the accompanying Management Plan, will be used to guide future development and improvements in the town in conjunction with existing and forthcoming planning policies adopted by Stafford Borough Council.

Picture 3.1 Distinctive local detail: cast iron street name sign



Planning Policy Context

3.3 Conservation Areas are defined as 'areas of architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' in Section 69 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* (The Act). Local Planning Authorities are required by the Act to identify the parts of their area that should be designated as conservation areas and to formulate and publish proposals to preserve or enhance them. Local authorities are advised to submit proposals for the protection and enhancement of conservation areas for consideration at a public meeting and to have regard to any views expressed by people attending the meeting.

3.4 Broadly, the effects of designation are:

- Conservation Area Consent must be obtained from the local planning authority or Secretary of State prior to the substantial or total demolition of any building or structure within a conservation area, with some exceptions;

Introduction 3

- The local planning authority must consider the desirability of *preserving or enhancing* the character or appearance of the conservation area when assessing applications for change in conservation areas;
- Permitted development rights are slightly different in conservation areas;
- Permission is required from the planning authority to fell or lop a tree over a certain size.

3.5 As well as receiving statutory protection, conservation areas are protected by regional, county and local planning policies. The relevant documents are:

- [The Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#);
- Central government guidance, principally as set out in "[Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment](#)" ;
- [West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy](#): RSS11, QE1 and QE5;
- [Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001](#), particularly Policies E&D18 to 22 affecting Conservation Areas, Policies E&D23 to 25 affecting Listed Buildings, and Policies E&D33 to 35 affecting archaeology.

3.6 Guidance on the management of the historic environment is also contained in:

- Stafford Borough Conservation Strategy for the Historic Environment, 1996 (SBC);
- [New and Old Shopfronts](#), 2000, Stafford Borough Planning Guidance (SBC);
- [Stone Article 4 Direction](#), 1996 (Supplementary Planning Guidance);
- [Conservation within the Highway: Structures of Historic Importance](#), May 2004 (SCC);
- [Staffordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation](#) 2007 (SCC).

Picture 3.2 Towpath under Newcastle Road



Purpose of the Appraisal

3.7 This appraisal defines the special architectural and historic interest for which the Stone Conservation Area merits designation. It identifies the positive features that should be protected and highlights the negative factors that detract from its character and appearance. It will be used by the

3 Introduction

Borough Council in considering proposals for demolition or alteration of buildings, as well as for new developments. It will also help property owners and developers to take account of the importance of buildings, features, spaces and landscape within and adjacent to the Conservation Area.

3.8 This conservation area character appraisal includes a Management Plan, setting out policies and actions to conserve and enhance the conservation area's special architectural and historic interest and to mitigate the effects of negative features. The proposals set out in the Management Plan will be included within the Local Development Framework as part of the evidence base.

3.9 Preparation of the appraisal involved an extensive survey of the Conservation Area undertaken in the summer and autumn of 2007. The omission of any particular feature does not imply that it is of no significance.

Community Involvement

3.10 The survey of the Conservation Area has included a process of public consultation to identify the following:

- The special characteristics of Stone Conservation Area;
- The key negative features and issues;
- A range of possible actions that would mitigate or offset these detractors.

3.11 The consultation began with the notification of key stake holders and members of the public in Stone at the beginning of the appraisal process. It was followed by a public meeting held in the Frank Jordan Community Centre on October 27th 2007, which was advertised in local newspapers and on the Council website. Leaflets were delivered to residential properties and posters were also displayed in public places. The meeting included a walkabout covering most of Stone Conservation Area after which a general discussion was held about the Conservation Area's special interest and the findings of the survey work by The Conservation Studio. A questionnaire asking for local people's views on these findings was also given out. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Borough Council, Town Council and local interest groups, as well as members of the public.

3.12 The first draft of this character appraisal was then prepared and completed in February 2008 in the light of comments received. A six week period of full public consultation was held in February and March 2008, inviting responses on the Appraisal and revised boundary. The owners of all properties within the area and other key stake holders were consulted by letter. The consultation was advertised in local newspapers and on the Councils website and the full Appraisal was made available via the Councils website. Revisions were made to the document in the light of responses received, and all responses were reported to Stafford Borough Council's Cabinet to inform their recommendation.

3.13 All representations were then considered and some minor amendments made to the text of the Appraisal to reflect additional comments.

Location and Landscape Setting 4

4 Location and Landscape Setting

Location and Activities

4.1 Stone lies approximately seven miles north of Stafford and seven miles south of Stoke on Trent. It is the second town, next to Stafford, in the Borough of Stafford. Historically, it has enjoyed an important position within England's road, railway and canal network. Today the M6 motorway passes within a few miles west of Stone and the principal access is via the A34 trunk road. Trains did not, at the time of survey in 2007, stop at Stone railway station. Stone stands approximately in the middle of the 93 mile long Trent and Mersey Canal which runs along the southern boundary of the Stone Conservation Area, and is a designated conservation area in its own right.

4.2 Stone as a whole has a population of c.14,500. The town acts as a focus for retail, commercial and industrial uses. Support services have also developed in the town. The town is host to an annual food and drink festival and the Stone Town Guide (2006) promotes the town as a place that offers "good shopping, a variety of restaurants and a wide choice of beer".

4.3 The Stone Conservation Area, which covers the town centre and only a relatively small proportion of the town as a whole, contains a mix of uses, mainly commercial, retail, residential and recreational.

Picture 4.1 Market Stalls, High Street



4.4 Commercial and retail uses in the conservation area are focused, as might be expected, primarily along High Street where there are a number of branch outlets of typical High street retailers e.g. Woolworths and WH Smiths but also a high proportion of independent retailers and a number of charity shops. There is a thrice weekly outdoor market in Market Place and a monthly Farmers' Market. Office uses are few; the upper floors of many shops are not in use. There is a superstore to the north of the town centre just outside the conservation area and a smaller one in the centre. Also located within the conservation area are a number of places of worship, a Town Hall, a public library, community centres (Stone station, Frank Jordan centre) and two schools (St Dominic's Priory School and Christchurch School, Northesk Street).

4 Location and Landscape Setting

4.5 Residential uses are present on the peripheral areas of the conservation area notably to the north along the network of streets containing Northesk Street, Kings Avenue, Alma Street, Granville Terrace and The Avenue. Newcastle Road in the west and Lichfield Street in the east are also partly residential. Three new flatted canalside developments together with a fourth under construction and a fifth in receipt of planning permission have begun to change the nature of the canalside from what was formerly a semi-industrial area to a residential area although Joules' Warehouse and the Boatbuilding Yard remain in industrial/storage use.

4.6 Similarly, and in common with other canals, the Trent and Mersey Canal is no longer a waterway for the transportation of goods but is primarily a place for leisure craft and a haven for wildlife. Narrow boats can be hired from the Crown Street boatyard and the towpath is used by walkers and cyclists.

Topography and Geology

4.7 Stone is situated above the north bank of the River Trent. St Michael's Church stands on a low promontory to the east of the town centre. Land within the conservation area falls almost imperceptibly to the south towards the river valley but there is also a marked rise north-westwards as can be seen along High Street and as demonstrated by the need for three locks along the short section of the Trent and Mersey Canal which runs parallel to the River Trent.

4.8 The central district of Staffordshire, in which Stone lies, is drained by the River Trent and its tributaries, here Scotch Brook. It is formed of rocks of the Triassic period, mostly Keuper red marls which have made the basis for a fertile soil.

Picture 4.2 12 and 14 High Street



Relationship of the Conservation Area to its Surroundings

4.9 The conservation area has suburban, primarily residential, surroundings to west, north and east but its southern boundary, formed in the main by the course of the canal, abuts the open floodplain of the River Trent which separates Stone from Walton part of which is the Crown Meadow Nature Reserve. The railway forms much of the northern boundary of the conservation area, but also included is an enclave of two late 19th century streets north of the railway (The Avenue and Granville Terrace).

Location and Landscape Setting 4

4.10 In broad terms, the landform of the area surrounding Stone is low-lying large arable fields defined by boundary hedgerows and sporadic lines of deciduous trees.

5 Historical Development

5 Historical Development

5.1 According to legend Stone owes its origins to the martyrdom of two Saxon princes, Rufin and Wulfad, who were murdered by their father Wulfhere (King of Mercia 659-675 A.D.) for following the Christian faith. Their bodies were buried, following Saxon custom, under a large cairn of stones.

5.2 Apparently overcome with remorse, Wulfhere appealed to St Chad for forgiveness. Around 670 a small priory and a church dedicated to St Mary and St Wulfad was built on the site, around which a small town grew up named 'Staines' (Anglo Saxon for Stones) after the grave cairn. There is an interpretation of the legend on the railings in the upper part of the High Street. The church remained until it was partially destroyed by the Danes in the 9th century. Despite this destruction, a few nuns seem to have survived and were in possession of the place at the time of the Norman Conquest. The Domesday Book of 1085 recorded a priest serving the church and living at Walton thereby confirming the establishment of the early church in Stone.

5.3 In 1130 Geoffrey de Clinton purchased the advowson of Stone Church and granted it to the Priory at Kenilworth. Further purchases and grants of land made the Priory at Stone so important that by the late 13th century it was independent of Kenilworth. In 1251 King Henry III granted a market charter to the Prior.

5.4 The Priory remained the centre of the town until its dissolution in 1537 in the reign of King Henry VIII. It occupied a large area of land bounded by Abbey Street and Crown Street on the south west; by Mill Street on the north west, and by an ancient trackway across the Hempbutts to the east. All the needs of a religious establishment were present including two mills, a fish pond, almonry and guest house. The Priory Church consisted of nave, south aisle and transepts and stood about half-way between the present church and Lichfield Street. Remains of the Priory undercroft survive in the cellar of 'The Priory', a grade II* listed Georgian house, in private occupation.

5.5 The dissolution of the monasteries saw much of the Priory dismantled. The buildings and site of Stone Priory were sold. The Priory Church was allowed to remain as Parish Church. Local people continued to use it until, due to lack of maintenance and perhaps weakened by the installation in 1710 of six bells, the building began to collapse in 1749. An Act of Parliament in 1753 enabled the rebuilding of the church and the present day St Michael's Church was consecrated in 1758.

5.6 In 1604 Stone was described as a "great parish and market town". The town escaped much of the conflict of the Civil War and in 1666 there were 170 families in Stone, some of them living in houses of considerable size. The Duke of Cumberland stayed at Cumberland House in High Street as Commander of the English Forces during the Jacobite rebellion.

5.7 Stone's trade prospered from its location on the post road from London to Chester, then the port for Ireland, but at the start of the 18th century the condition of the road was appalling. Tolls on the highway improved matters and in 1720 Stone was described as a "well accommodated Town with several convenient inns". In the 1770s a new road, today's Lichfield Street, had been cut to form a direct approach to High Street. By the end of the 18th century all the principal roads to Stone had been turnpiked.

Historical Development 5

Map 5.1 Ordnance Survey Map of 1901



Map 5.2 Ordnance Survey Map of 1901



5.8 During the 18th century Stone grew in importance as an important coaching town and in 1838, at the height of the coaching era, 38 coaches a day passed through the town. To accommodate the traveller many coaching inns were established in the High Street, the most prestigious of which was Crown Hotel (1771).

5 Historical Development

5.9 The railways arrived in 1848 starting a rapid decline in coaching. Stone Station belonged to the North Staffordshire Railway Company. Stone was on the North Staffordshire line from Stoke which linked with the London and North Western at Colwich West Junction. There was also a connecting line from Stone to Norton Bridge on the LNWR route between Crewe and Stafford. The line was closed to goods traffic in 1967.

5.10 The Trent and Mersey Canal has played a vital role in the development of the town. In 1766 Josiah Wedgwood and engineer James Brindley signed the document that established the Trent & Mersey Canal Company. The canal opened in 1771 and provided a quick, safe and cheap method of bringing large amounts of raw materials to the Potteries and also transporting china products to various destinations. It linked the navigable River Trent to the Bridgwater Canal at Preston Brook and hence to the River Mersey.

5.11 The canal provided the means of transporting goods and merchandise required by Josiah Wedgwood and his developing pottery industry. The “Grand Trunk” was to form the main line of a system of canals which would link the ports of Liverpool, Hull and Bristol to a major part of the country. The southern part of the canal was built first and reached Stone in 1771. From then onwards the town grew and prospered as an important commercial centre on the new canal. When it was finally completed and operational the Trent and Mersey Navigation Company located their headquarters at Stone indicating its important mid-point location in the developing canal network.

5.12 Several years later, a traveller remarked, “The market town of Stone from a poor insignificant place is grown neat and handsome in its buildings, and, from its wharfs and busy traffic, wears the lively aspect of a little sea-port”. This observation aptly illustrates the changes from a coaching halt to a busy developing town.

5.13 Evidence of increased development along the canal is still apparent today. However, certain buildings have been removed and modern infill or replacement buildings are beginning to change the canal corridor’s character. One of the most important wharfs, the Grand Trunk Wharf, opposite former Trent Hospital, is still in use for boat repairs.

5.14 Although the importance of the canal as a freight carrier declined after the railway was opened, the advantages of water transport were not totally abandoned by the local businessmen. In 1881, Joules’ Brewery decided to build their fine ale stores with waterside loading bays close to the Grand Trunk Wharf. The buildings stretched along the cut enhancing the setting with their five gables and intricate tile patterns on the roof. The brewery has closed but the buildings are still in productive use. Although the canal is no longer used for transportation of cargo, over 10,000 narrow boats pass through Stone every year.

5.15 Stone’s population rose from 1,500 to 3,000 between 1801 and 1834. A Directory of 1835-6 states “the chief article of manufacture is shoes; upon the Scotch Brook stream are flour and flint mills; malt is made in the town; and there is a small trade in timber and a boat-building yard”.

5.16 The boot and shoe industry developed in the town during the 19th century. In an 1818 trade directory half of the inhabitants listed in trade were associated with the shoe trade. In 1834 there were sixteen shoe and boot-making workshops in the town and by 1874 there were 1,600 people engaged in the industry with considerable trade to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. New machinery was introduced in the 1850s provoking strikes and violent incidents. Much of the work

Historical Development 5

was undertaken at home in the house or in small outbuildings, but larger buildings were erected to accommodate the workshops and small-scale factories later in the century. Buildings to the north of High Street and in Lichfield Street were associated with this trade.

5.17 Brewing prospered from the 18th century onwards. The most notable brewer was John Joule, who brewed beer from 1758, although the brewery is now closed having been taken over by Bass of Burton. Former offices stand in the High Street. The business thrived throughout the second half of the 19th century. Local deliveries were made by dray and the company owned forty shire horses and twenty drays. The Joules' Brewery Warehouse (1881) stands beside the canal on the site of the Canal Company warehouse. It was used to transport to other parts of the country and to export Stone Ales to America and Europe via Liverpool and Hull respectively. The second notable brewer was Bents located on what is now Mount Industrial Estate.

Picture 5.1 Joules' Brewery Warehouse



5.18 In the mid 19th century there was a revival of the Roman Catholic faith in Stone due to the work of two figures: Father Dominic and Mother Margaret Hallahan. A chapel, dedicated to St Anne and designed by Augustus Pugin was opened and blessed by Father Dominic in 1844. The chapel continued to serve the Catholic community until 1853 when the land and chapel was given to Mother Margaret on which to build a convent. In 1853 the foundation stone of the present St Dominic's Church was laid. It was designed by Joseph Hansom who also designed Birmingham Town Hall but is better known for the invention of the hansom cab. Having completed the church, Mother Margaret erected a girls' school which remained under the direct control of the sisters until 1877.

5.19 In 2001 the population was about 14,500. Old industries such as brewing and shoemaking have all but disappeared and the canal is now a place of leisure, tourism and recreation as opposed to a prime means of transporting goods. Stone continues to play an important role in the economy of the Borough of Stafford.

6 Spatial Analysis

6 Spatial Analysis

Plan Form and Layout

6.1 The street pattern of the historic core of Stone has been determined by two factors: the site of the medieval Augustinian Priory to the east of today's town centre and the presence of a major medieval route along the Trent valley which, in the conservation area, followed the course of today's Lichfield Road (as far as Mansion House), Abbey Street, Crown Street and Newcastle Road.

6.2 A market charter was granted in the 13th century and, following the closing of the Priory in the 16th century, the focus of the settlement moved westwards from the site of the Priory (a large area centred approximately on today's St Michael's churchyard) to the market place. This in part explains why St Michael's Church is at some distance from the commerce of the town centre, it having been built in the 18th century approximately on the site of the Priory Church. Mill Street, only part of which lies within the conservation area, possibly originated in the 12th century as a track leading to the Priory's mill.

Picture 6.1 St Dominics Church



6.3 Construction of the Trent and Mersey Canal in the late 18th century had little effect on the street pattern as the canal followed a course roughly parallel to the River Trent south of the town's confines. This dislocation from the town centre is still apparent today. Similarly the coming of the railway did not significantly affect the form of the town centre because the two tracks passed north and west of the town centre.

6.4 In 1770 a new road was constructed from the Mansion House in Lichfield Road to join High Street and this became the route for coaches through the town in preference to Abbey Lane. Market Place was where the coach route turned south to join Crown Street. In the past, High Street was shorter, extending only from the top of Stafford Street to the Crown Hotel, and was known as Market Street. In 1998, the entire High Street and Market Place were pedestrianised and traffic was led around the pedestrianised town centre by the construction of Christchurch Way.

Spatial Analysis 6

6.5 The strong linear definition of the High Street, the canal parallel to the south, and railway parallel to the north, remain very much in evidence and have been a principal factor in determining the linear character of built development within Stone.

Landmarks, Focal Points and Views

6.6 Important views are marked on the accompanying townscape appraisal map. They relate to the area's landmark buildings or focal spaces which are also marked on the townscape appraisal map. Landmark buildings are those which stand out within the townscape and contribute to the town's local distinctiveness.

6.7 The most prominent landmark within the conservation area and beyond is the stone-built tower of St Michael's Church which can be viewed from many parts of the town and from the canal towpath and is one of the defining features of the town. The most impressive view is obtained along the approach to Stone from Walton where the church stands well above its surroundings. Unfortunately this view is spoiled by the blue Westbridge modern sports centre (outside the conservation area) in the foreground.

6.8 The spire of St John's is a local landmark in the west of the conservation and is located at a busy road junction and bridge over the railway.

6.9 Places of worship such as these have been deliberately designed to have landmark quality due to their imposing architecture and, usually, a prominent tall tower or spire e.g. St Michael's, St John's and St Anne's. Other landmark buildings stand out because of their location especially those which provide an end stop to views e.g. the Crown Hotel viewed along Mill Street, the former Post Office and the tree in Granville Square viewed from High Street and the Town Library seen across Market Place.

6.10 Joules' Warehouse and St Dominic's Church and School make a large and positive contribution to the townscape because of their height, mass and architectural quality. The former is situated on Newcastle Road, the latter on Station Road. Joules' Warehouse also has a significant frontage to the canal, from where goods were loaded to barges, and this is one of the key elements along the stretch of canal that lies within the conservation area.

6 Spatial Analysis

Picture 6.2 Stone Railway Station, a focal building



Open Spaces, Trees and Landscape

6.11 The Stone Conservation Area is primarily urban and tightly-knit but there are a number of important open spaces which make a positive contribution to the townscape and should be preserved. The principal open spaces within the conservation area are identified on the accompanying townscape appraisal map.

6.12 The most significant green open space in the conservation area is the grassy churchyard of St Michael's Church which slopes down from the church to Church Road and Lichfield Street. From these streets there are good upward-looking views of the church in a green setting. In contrast, from outside the church itself there are views out of the conservation area southwards to groups of trees in the surrounding countryside. The green churchyard, unexpectedly devoid of gravestones (removed in the 1970s) provides a semi-rural setting for the church and is an important 'breathing space' within the town.

6.13 A similar green breathing space is the churchyard around Christchurch which is mostly concealed from Christchurch Way by the red brick church. Here there are some fine yew trees which help to soften the urban streetscene and create a tranquil open area close to the town centre.

6.14 The canal is a haven for waterfowl and the canal towpath forms a green linear walk on the edge of the settlement – an important resource for the town and a vital element of the conservation area's special interest. The south bank is much less developed than the north bank and, from along the southern length between Star Lock Bridge and Workhouse Bridge there are wide views southwards over the Trent's floodplain.

6.15 Though threatened by development, the former bowling green to the Crown Hotel, originating from the late 18th century, survives as an unexpected enclosed green space between Crown Street and the Canal, surrounded by brick garden walls with a pavilion by the canal. This area has been divorced from its historical context by Crown Street.

Spatial Analysis 6

6.16 Private rear gardens of properties in the residential areas contribute the area's greenery. Stonefield House, the Priory and The Mansion have large gardens which are important to the setting of the respective listed buildings.

Picture 6.3 Plane Tree in Granville Square



6.17 In addition to these three significant green spaces, the conservation area contains three planned urban public open squares: Market Square, Granville Square and Earl St Vincent Square. Market Square has medieval origins and is now stone-paved and pedestrianised but still performs as a market place and meeting place that, thanks to the pedestrianisation, flows into the High Street itself.

6.18 Granville Square is equally significant in the streetscene but, because of traffic through and beside the space, it does not successfully fulfill its role as an urban meeting point and pedestrians are not inclined to linger. Its focus is a single plane tree, planted in 1903 to commemorate the coronation of King George VII, and a grade II listed war memorial. Prior to 1903 the area contained a pump and was known as Pump Square. The space is, sadly, severed from the pedestrianised High Street by the busy A520, a major route through the town, but is nevertheless a vital part of the townscape being highly visible from the upper end of High Street.

6.19 Earl St Vincent Square is a late 20th century creation formed from the re-alignment of Stafford Street. The space is cut off, physically and visually, from the main business of the town, does not relate well to surrounding buildings and lacks focus. At present the area lacks a sense of place but this may change when an adjacent vacant site is developed.

6.20 Trees make an important contribution to the conservation area's special interest. In addition to trees which enhance the significant green spaces mentioned above (St Michael's Churchyard, Christchurch churchyard and the canal towpath) and the exceptional commemorative plane tree in Granville Square, there are young, newly planted acacia trees in High Street, mature lime trees in Station Road, street trees in King's Avenue, mature trees lining the railway along Granville Terrace and Kings Avenue all of which make a positive contribution to the town's varied streetscape.

6 Spatial Analysis

Public Realm

6.21 Items in the public realm (i.e. the area around and between buildings such as streets, squares and parks) are primarily modern and these are not always in harmony with the conservation area's special historic interest. Standard concrete or galvanized steel street lighting columns in the residential streets in the north of the conservation area are particularly out of keeping.

6.22 High Street has been pedestrianised and covered with brick setts and paviors. Although the kerb has been taken away and the street now has a level surface, the width of the original carriageway is marked out with a row of stones the effect of which is to retain the visual distinction between footway and carriageway and preserve the previous proportions of the floorscape.

6.23 Many items of street furniture are embossed with the 'Stafford knot'. The Stafford Knot is an ancient heraldic emblem used widely in insignia throughout the County of Staffordshire. Historically it has been widely used on buildings in the form of stone plaques or as motifs on building details such as lead gutters. The emblem has a local distinctiveness and is now included on many items of street furniture in the conservation area. This serves tie the image of the public realm together. The emblem is used on cast iron bollards, signposts and waste bins.

6.24 The public realm is given a local distinctiveness and its historic appearance enhanced by isolated and scattered elements of earlier features, for example an old milestone, but most notably historic stone surfaces in side streets and alleys and beside the canal locks.

6.25 Areas of historic paving within the conservation area display a variety of techniques and materials. The entrance to St Michael's Church is paved with stone setts as are side streets off High Street. Narrow side alleys such as the one beside 19 High Street are sometimes paved with Staffordshire blue brick. The floorscape of the canal in the vicinity of the locks retains many original stone setts, especially close to The Star Lock.

Picture 6.4 Historic stone setts off High Street



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7 The Buildings of the Conservation Area

Building Types and Principal Buildings

7.1 There are many examples of religious, residential, industrial and public building. The conservation area is therefore host to a variety of building types but is especially notable for some exceptionally interesting places of worship including St Michael's Church (1753), St Dominic's Church (1852-3), St John's Church (1870), Christchurch and St Anne's Chapel (1844).

7.2 Institutional buildings of note include the former Market Hall (now the Town Library) built in 1868 on the site of the Old Butter Market; Old Trent Hospital, a former workhouse of 1753; Christchurch School a red brick school in a Flemish Gothic style of 1887; National Board School in Lichfield Road, now the Frank Jordan Community Centre (1858).

7.3 The Crown Hotel was the town's grandest of several coaching inns. Many inns have since been demolished or changed use but The Star Inn, which pre-dates the canal beside which it stands, is believed to date back to the 16th century. The former Falcon Inn at the junction of High Street and Christchurch Way still has a sign for 'Bents Ales and Stone Stout', a local brewery (now demolished).

Picture 7.1 Chapel of St Anne



7.4 The conservation area contains some fine historic residential buildings. Nos. 17-27 Lichfield Street is a row of late 18th century red brick houses in a typically Georgian style embellished with Classical architectural detail. Cumberland House, High Street and No. 15 Station Road (Town Council Offices) are good examples of early Georgian town houses.

7.5 Most surviving industrial buildings are related in some way to the canal but within the town can be found a much altered late 18th century mill (Stubbs Mill) and, to the rear of High Street, remnants of former boot-making workshops. In Adie's Alley there exists a former malthouse with kiln that was formerly part of the Joules' Brewery complex. To the south of Stafford Street, facing Crown Street is a row of houses and shops some of which have a third storey window arrangement that is similar to that of a hand-loom weaver's house. It is probable that these premises were used as part of the

7 The Buildings of the Conservation Area

shoe and leather industry. Another survivor of Stone's industrial past is The Mansion in Lichfield Street which is a late 18th century house with 19th century alterations that was part of the iron works of Rangeley and Dixon, founded c. 1818, later Rangeley and Diggles, who made mileposts for the Trent and Mersey Canal.

7.6 Canal buildings and structures are an important element. In addition to three locks and bridges, two canal features are of special note, Joules' Brewery Warehouse (1881) and the boatyard west of Workhouse Bridge. The boatyard contains three dry docks, two built with roofs – one supported by iron pillars, the other by brick piers. The wet slip has a modern covering. Nearby stands two mid 19th century listed buildings: a blacksmith's shop and a mechanic's workshop and attached office. This is a remarkable ensemble of canal-related structures.

Listed Buildings

7.7 There are 62 listed buildings within the conservation area, of which five are listed grade II*. The accompanying townscape appraisal map shows the statutorily listed buildings within the conservation area boundary. Ten listed buildings are directly related to the canal.

7.8 The conservation area's historic building stock dates principally from two particular periods with contrasting styles; 18th century Georgian and 19th century Victorian. The former dates from the town's role as an agricultural market town and its heyday as a place of coaching inns in the late 18th/early 19th century and the latter dates from the town's economic growth due to industrialisation, especially boot making, in the mid/late 19th century.

Picture 7.2 Stone Town Library - a key unlisted building



Key Unlisted Buildings

7.9 A number of unlisted buildings have been identified as being buildings of townscape merit. Buildings identified as having 'townscape merit' will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a *positive* contribution to the

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special interest of the Conservation Area. Where a building has been heavily altered, and restoration would be impractical, they are excluded. These have all been marked on the townscape appraisal map included in this document and include, amongst many others, Joules' Brewery Warehouse, the Town Library and the Frank Jordan Community Centre.

7.10 Government guidance in PPG15 '*Planning and the historic environment*' advises that a general presumption exists in favour of retaining those buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area (paragraph 4.27). The guidance note states that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings.

Building Scale and Form

7.11 The conservation area can be divided into four distinct character areas. The built characteristics of each of the four areas are appraised in the relevant parts of 8 'The Character of the Conservation Area' below.

7.12 In broad terms the conservation area has a generally tight knit urban form in which terraces or short rows of continuous development follow a clear back of pavement building line. Within some residential streets, notably Northesk Street, Kings Avenue, Granville Street and The Avenue, there are small front gardens and longer back gardens, but within the town centre buildings open directly onto the footway and former rear gardens or workshop areas have mostly been redeveloped for car parking or ancillary uses. Detached houses in surrounding plots of land are few: The Mansion House, The Priory and Stonefield House. A similarly large plot ratio can be found at the non-residential Christ Church C.E. First School and Christ Church and, in an exceptionally large plot, St Michael's Church.

7.13 Three storeys is the normal building height within the town centre with occasional instances of two storeys. In contrast, as one moves away from the commercial centre, two storeys are more normal in the residential areas occasionally rising to three storeys. A similar decline in building width is apparent. Roofs are commonly ridged with plain eaves, but sometimes concealed behind a parapet. Eaves height varies in High Street reflecting the variety of building design over a 250 year period.

7.14 In Station Road there is an abrupt change of scale as a result of the mass and size of St Dominic's Church which holds a prominent corner location and the multi-gabled St Dominic's School which seems out of character on the edge of a residential area of domestic scale. Joules' Brewery Warehouse on Newcastle Street is another example of a massive building which dominates its surroundings, but both are exceptions to a prevalent two- or three-storey built form throughout the conservation area. Other large buildings of atypical height and mass do not have the same overbearing influence on the streetscene, for example The Crown Inn, Christ Church School and No. 42 Radford Road (former Co-operative Building).

Building Materials and Local Details

7.15 Despite the complexity of architectural detail, building age, and style found within the Stone Conservation Area, this variety derives from different combinations of a quite restricted palette of materials, scale and form.

7 The Buildings of the Conservation Area

7.16 Brick is the most prevalent building material in the conservation area, testimony to the high proportion of 18th century buildings. The use of stone is also significant usually during the late 19th century for high status buildings such as places of worship or commerce.

7.17 With the exception of the demolished Augustinian Priory, which is known to have been stone-built, it is likely that the vast majority of medieval buildings in the conservation area were timber-framed constructions. The Black Horse Inn, once in High Street but demolished in 1954 was probably one of Stone's last surviving timber-framed buildings. All the others have been demolished and replaced, many during the town's expansion in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, others more recently.

Picture 7.3 The Priory, Lichfield Street



7.18 Until the arrival of canals and railways significantly eased the transport of heavy goods, local stone was an expensive building material used only for prestigious buildings such as St Michael's Church. Local stone which probably came from the demolished priory can be seen in boundary walls around St Michael's Church and along Abbey Lane. With the exception of civil engineering works of the late 18th century canal itself, stone did not again become a prominent building material until the second half of the 19th century when it was used in combination with brick (e.g. no. 10 High Street, a house converted to a bank in the 19th century, and no. 50 High Street, former Joules' Brewery Offices) or on the façade of commercial buildings (e.g. no. 57 High Street, currently HSBC bank) where stone was deemed to be a suitably grand and impressive material. This building and St Dominic's Church are faced with ashlar stonework, i.e. the practice of laying stone in smooth cut or dressed blocks in regular courses, separated by only the thinnest of joints.

7.19 Brick is by far the most prevalent building material within the conservation area. Red brick laid in Flemish bond is common in the town's 18th century buildings (e.g. nos. 17-27 Lichfield Street and the Crown Inn) and also in the post-railway 19th century residential streets such as Northesk Street and Alma Street. Some brick buildings have been painted, either for decorative or remedial reasons. Unusually, the former Market Hall of 1868, now the Town Library, is built with yellow bricks.

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7.20 Stucco, a form of render popular in the early 19th century and a characteristic of Regency architecture, is not common in the conservation area. The most notable stucco buildings are Cumberland House in High Street and no.11 Margaret Street, an early 19th century house, taken over in the late 19th century as part of the former St Mary's Home.

7.21 Most eighteenth century roofs were covered with clay tile. Slate is more prevalent on buildings constructed after the arrival of the canal and the railway. On a large number of buildings, both tile and slate have been replaced in the 20th century with concrete tiles or artificial slate. Thatch would once have been common but the only surviving example is the Crown and Anchor public house in Granville Square, a 1930s reconstruction.

7.22 Window and door joinery in the area's historic buildings was invariably timber although this has often been replaced with uPVC or aluminium to the detriment of historic character and appearance. Timber sliding sash windows came to prominence from c. 1680 onwards and, as a large proportion of the conservation area's building stock dates from the 18th century and later, this is the characteristic type of window, of varying size and pattern of glazing, but generally recessed in the brick or stonework and with a strong vertical emphasis.

7.23 As glass manufacture improved, larger panes of glass became more readily available and sash windows from the mid 19th century onwards have fewer panes of glass, sometimes a single pane in each sash.

Boundary Treatment

7.24 Boundary walls and railings are part of the town's character area, especially in the residential parts of the conservation area where some properties have small front gardens. Red brick walls are the most common, with a variety of copings in brick specials or stone, but there are also many blue brick walls in the Victorian residential areas and a few instances of stone boundaries, most notably around the churchyard of St Michael's Church. The front boundary wall to St Dominic's School in Station Road is constructed with red brick and a stone coping. There is a remnant of an unusual 'crinkle-crankle' wall behind the Town Council Offices in Station Road. This was a late 18th century type of wavy kitchen garden wall that was strengthened by its own curves and angles, whilst also providing protective alcoves for fruit trees.

7.25 Red brick walls formerly bounded the plots stretching back from High Street but most have been demolished to make a wider access for vehicles and parking. Iron railings were formerly common along Northesk Street, Kings Avenue, Granville Terrace and The Avenue but many were removed during World War II.

7.26 Boundary walls are part of the distinctive character of the area and an important element in defining the public and private interface. Although red bricks predominate, Stafford blue bricks are used for front boundary walls to some of the Victorian terraced houses, and can also be seen as a plinth or coping.

Local Features of Interest

7.27 In addition to the numerous architectural details and embellishments found on the area's historic buildings, there are a number of local features which add to the area's distinct identity and help to create a sense of place. Some of these, like the war memorial (grade II) in Granville Square

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and the milepost (grade II) in High Street are protected by their listed status, but others, whilst not listed, nevertheless form part of the special interest of the conservation area and it is highly desirable that they are retained. Examples of local features of interest are the torch snuffer on Cumberland House, the crinkle-crankle wall behind the Town Council offices and cast iron street name signs.

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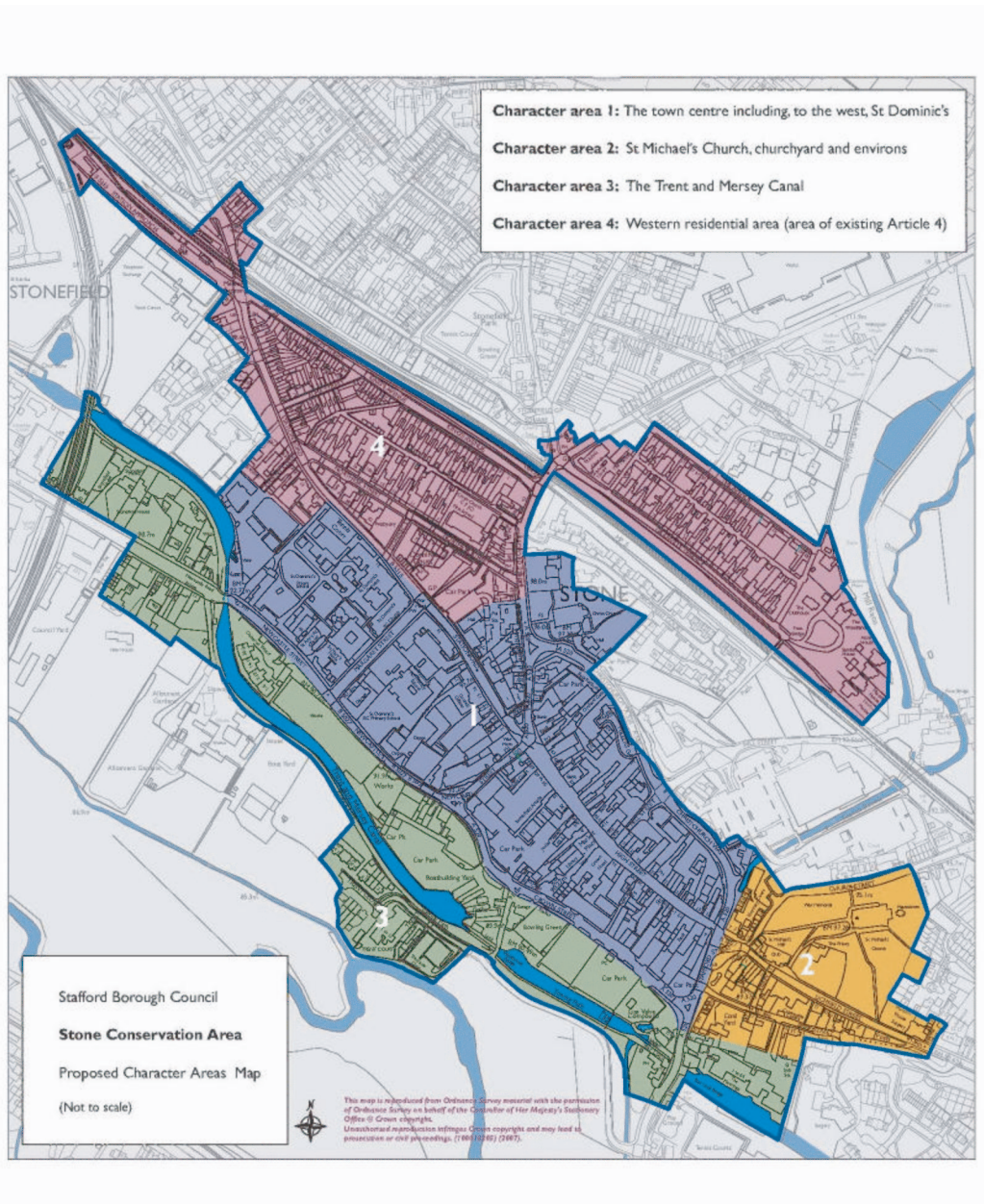
8 The Character of the Conservation Area

Summary of Character Areas

8.1 The Stone Conservation Area can be divided into Character Areas according to landscape, topography, historical development, layout, building type and uses. These are

- Character Area 1: The Town Centre including St Dominic's Church
- Character Area 2: St Michael's Church, churchyard and environs
- Character Area 3: The Trent and Mersey Canal
- Character Area 4: North Western residential area

Map 8.1 Map of Stone Character Areas



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Character Area 1: The town centre including St Dominic's Church

8.2 This character area comprises the commercial heart of Stone. This area, together with St Michael's Church and environs (Character Area 2), contains the town's historic core including many notable buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries.

8.3 The spine of the area is formed by High Street and its continuation north-westwards along Station Road. High Street, now pedestrianised, varies in width and curves slightly as it rises from its junction with Stafford Street. There is a strong contrast in the spaces at each end of the street. At the eastern end there is a considerable narrowing of High Street and a 'pinchpoint' entrance at its junction with Stafford Street which visually cuts off the Lichfield Street area (Character Area 2) from High Street. In contrast, at the western end of High Street, Granville Square is a wide open space whose function as 'town square' is today in conflict with its other role as a busy junction of roads, i.e. the crossing of Stone's spine road by the busy A520.

Picture 8.1 Christ Church, Radford Street (rear)



8.4 About half way along its length, High Street is punctuated by the Market Place which breaks into the established pattern of an unbroken row of roadside development holding a strong back-of-pavement line. In addition to side streets such as Mill Street and Adie's Alley there are arched entries leading along smaller side streets and alleys along which there were small workshops that were once active in the shoe trade though few survive today.

8.5 Building height in High Street varies between two and three storeys resulting in an irregular eaves line. Much of the development is 19th century or earlier. On the north side however, between nos. 29 and 41, a row of late 20th century developments of indifferent design erodes the historic character of the streetscene and mars the setting of the Crown Inn, the key building in High Street. Buildings are generally grouped as continuous linear development on either side of the road.

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8.6 Properties in High Street stretch back in long thin plots to Christchurch Way (north) and Crown Street (south). The former is a late 20th century road constructed to by-pass the town centre, the latter formed part of the medieval 'King's highway' from London to Chester that followed the line of Lichfield Road as far as the Mansion House, then along Abbey Street, Crown Street and Newcastle Street.

8.7 Station Road is decidedly different in character to High Street. It forms the transition between the commercial and business uses of High Street and residential streets to the west of the town centre such as Northesk Street and Alma Street (Character Area 4). The key component of Station Road is the collection of buildings beyond the junction with Margaret Street comprising St Dominic's Convent and St Dominic's Priory School, both listed grade II. To the south of these buildings stands the Chapel of St Anne, designed by Pugin, Architect of the Houses of Parliament. Catholicism was revived in Stone in the mid 19th century by Father Dominic and Mother Margaret, hence Dominic and Margaret street names and this interesting ensemble of ecclesiastical building.

Picture 8.2 Looking north along High Street



General characteristics:

- High Street, the traffic-free spine of the conservation area and a bustling pedestrian area;
- Predominantly commercial, office and retail uses with educational and religious uses in the west;
- Bi-weekly outdoor market in Market Place and High Street;
- Variation in the width of High Street and the slight northward rise and curve, a combination which adds interest to the townscape;
- Former open space to the rear of High Street is now used mainly for car parking;
- Market Place, a paved open space at the heart of the town (market charter granted in 1251);
- Key buildings: Crown Inn, Cumberland House, Joules' Brewery Offices, Market Hall (now library), Christchurch, St Dominic's Church and School;
- Remnants of former burgage plots to the rear of High Street frontages;
- Street furniture co-ordinated with the 'Stafford Knot';

8 The Character of the Conservation Area

- Street trees in High Street and Station Road;
- The plane tree in Granville Square and recently planted street trees in High Street;
- Commemorative railings depicting the legend of the founding of the town;

Built Characteristics

- Development in High Street and Radford Road is primarily 2 or 3 bays and 2 or 3 storeys set directly along a well-defined back-of-pavement line, most with ground floor shopfronts;
- Regular rhythm of windows gives a strong vertical emphasis to the street frontage;
- Dark orange local brick and painted brick are the norm, with some examples of stucco and late 19th century stone detail;
- Variable height of eaves line reflecting the age and status of roadside building;
- Pitched gable-ended roofs running parallel to the road are common and building widths are typically narrow;
- Ground floor shopfronts are common, traditionally with stallriser, narrow fascia and pilasters;
- Windows recessed with projecting cills;
- Variety of window types and openings, generally with a vertical emphasis;
- On many buildings architectural embellishment is confined to dentillation beneath the eaves and segmental brick arched lintels;
- Margaret Street and Station Road (east) are characterised by large institutional or religious buildings with a commanding presence in the street scene, and are dominated by St Dominic's Church (stone-built) and St Dominic's School (brick with stone dressings)
- Archways leading to alleys to the rear of High Street properties, retaining paved surfaces of stone setts or brick paviers;
- Former shoe-making workshops and other outbuildings to rear of High Street, of linear form along the burgage plots;

Picture 8.3 Red Lion, High Street



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Negative Features

- Poor townscape at junction of Crown Street and Newcastle Street (rear of Somerfield);
- Modern development opposite Market Place dilutes historic character and appearance;
- Historic timber windows and doors replaced with UPVC or aluminium;
- Loss of architectural details such as timber windows, doors and chimneys is eroding the historic character and appearance of the area;
- The Malthouse in Adie's Alley and No. 48 High Street are in a poor state of repair;
- Shopfronts, signage and roller shutters that are insensitive to the special historic character of the conservation area;
- Removal of historic shopfronts;
- A-boards present a hazard to pedestrians and a cluttered appearance to the street scene;
- Obtrusive overhead wires and wiring on building facades;
- Neglect of maintenance and repair of some upper floors;
- Small number of vacant shops and underused or vacant upper storeys;
- Poor quality of the design, materials and scale of some modern buildings;
- Unauthorised advertising banners;
- Radford Road is an unwelcoming gateway to the town because of its run-down appearance and heavy traffic flow;
- Crown Street and Christchurch are also unwelcoming routes into the town for vehicles, presenting poorly maintained rear elevations and outbuildings;
- Poor pedestrian linkage to the canal area.

Character Area 2: St Michael's Church, churchyard and environs

8.8 This area comprises the 'lower' eastern part of the town centre: St Michael's Church and Lichfield Street, Abbey Street, Stafford Street and Church Street. Whilst this area is historically part of the core of the town centre and might have been considered as part of Character Area 1, it has been cut off from High Street and Market Place by the recent construction of Christchurch Way, a by-pass road which carries traffic around the town and, because it carries a high level of traffic, acts as a barrier to pedestrians moving from the relative quiet of High Street to Stafford Street and Lichfield Street. The most dominant feature is St Michael's Church which stands on a promontory in the western corner of the conservation area slightly isolated from the town centre. The character area covers much of the site of the demolished Augustinian Priory, part of whose undercroft survives in the house known as The Priory in Lichfield Street.

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Picture 8.4 Church of St Michael



8.9 St Michael's Churchyard is the most significant green area in the town centre and contains some fine trees. It was cleared of its gravestones in the 1970s giving the open space a denuded appearance. However the removal of small gravestones has given added emphasis to the remaining large tombs which include the grade II* listed tomb of William Crompton, d.1603, which is located on its original site in the former chancel of the Priory Church which collapsed in 1749 and the grade II* listed Jervis Mausoleum c. 1760. The churchyard is enclosed by a stone wall. Churchyard walls and gatepiers in Church Street are grade II listed.

8.10 Lichfield Street was laid out c.1770 as a direct route from Lichfield Road at the Mansion House to the High Street. It contains some fine late 18th century brick houses and a late 19th century National School (1858) and teacher's residence, now the Frank Jordan Community Centre and a private dwelling respectively. The south side of the street is characterised by a terraced form of development whilst, in contrast, the north side contains has an open character in which stand detached buildings such as The Mansion House, The Priory and St Michael's Hall.

8.11 Stafford Street, the south end of Church Street and the west end of Lichfield Street contain secondary shopping frontage. Earl St Vincent Square, being cut off from the town centre, lacks a role in the public realm.

General characteristics:

- St Michael's Church whose tower is the most prominent local landmark of the Stone Conservation Area;
- Lichfield Street (west) has predominantly commercial and retail uses;
- Green open space of St Michael's churchyard including its trees, tombs and listed boundary wall;
- Earl St Vincent Square is a public open space recently created by the realignment of roads to facilitate the by-pass;

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- Upward views of St Michael's Church from Church Street and Lichfield Street;
- Row of listed late 18th century town houses in Lichfield, built shortly after the road was cut through c.1780;
- Former warehouse and possible shoe-making workshops in Stafford Street and Abbey Street;
- Notable listed tombs and mausoleum;
- Historic stone floor surface of roads leading to the church;
- Key buildings: The Mansion House, The Priory, St Michael's Hall and Frank Jordan Centre.

Built Characteristics

- Close-knit form of development south of Lichfield Street with a downward slope towards the canal;
- Nos 17-27 Lichfield Street is a terrace comprised of two bay three storey town houses with vertical sliding sash windows (second storey windows of lesser height than ground and first floor);
- Strong back of pavement line on south side of Lichfield Street in contrast to open character of the north side;
- The Priory and The Mansion House are detached properties within large gardens, each with an atypical relationship to the street – the former well set back, the latter gable end on;
- St Michael's Hall and Frank Jordan Centre are low-lying single storey institutional buildings that are at odds with the vertical emphasis of two- and three-storey residential properties in Lichfield Street;
- West end of Lichfield Street contains three storey buildings with ground floor shopfronts that form part of the town's commercial core but are severed from it by the Christchurch Way bypass;
- Downward slope towards the canal gives prominence to roofscape of ridged roofs with brick chimneys and clay pots;
- The themes of dark orange brick and plain clay tiles are repeated as the dominant building materials for the late 18th and 19th century houses; as is the gable ended roof form, though with the notable exception of the somewhat grander Priory with its hipped roof;
- Some frontages have been painted or rendered, and stone is not only found in the church, but in the later bay windows to the Mansion House and details such as window sills, lintels and coping stones;
- Brick chimney stacks and clay pots add interest to the roofline;
- Recessed windows with vertical emphasis, many with timber sliding sash windows;
- Second floor windows smaller in size than lower windows.

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Picture 8.5 Ornate cast-iron balcony at The Mansion House, Lichfield Street



Negative Features

- Historic timber windows and doors replaced with uPVC or aluminium;
- Historic shopfronts removed and replaced with crude heritage approximations;
- Loss of architectural details such as timber windows, doors and chimneys is eroding the historic character and appearance of the area;
- The A520 disconnects this area from the pedestrianised town centre;
- External wiring is unsightly on some properties;
- Neglect of maintenance and repair of some upper floors and vacant or under-used upper storeys;
- Garish shopfronts and advertising signage, especially banners;
- Unkempt appearance of Earl St Vincent Square;
- Neglected site adjacent to Earl Vincent Square;
- Removal of gravestones from St Michael's churchyard has resulted in a bleak appearance;
- Neglected and unkempt former Coal Yard.

Character Area 3: The Trent and Mersey Canal

8.12 This character area is made up of a corridor of land alongside the Trent and Mersey Canal as it passes through the conservation area. The conservation boundary has been drawn to closely follow the southern verge of the canal towpath but it detours to include the site and remaining buildings of the former workhouse and infirmary. As well as historic canal-related structures and buildings, the area contains canalside residential flatted developments built in the late 20th century to take advantage of a waterfront location. The character of the area is therefore changing both in terms of uses and the relationship of development to the waterside. Historically, the town's residences turned their back to the waterfront but recent residential developments face the water in order to take advantage of views over the canal.

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Picture 8.6 Newcastle Road lock



8.13 In addition to canalside features, the character area contains a number of properties along Newcastle Road, west of Newcastle Road Bridge. Some were built as part of the late 18th/early 19th century expansion of Stone following the building of the Canal, 1772, including a former Inn and a former smithy. Of particular note is Stonefield House (grade II) screened from Newcastle Road by greenery and trees, this stuccoed brick house backs onto the Canal and once had a warehouse and wharf connected with it. Newcastle Road is here noticeably wide and straight in comparison to east of the canal bridge.

8.14 From the towpath just west of Star Lock at the southern end of the canal there are views northward of the tower of St Michael's Church, seen over the car park and the rear of High Street. These views help place the canal in its suburban context although, turning one's back to the town, there are views south over the open grassed floodplain of the River Trent.

General Characteristics

- Trent and Mersey Canal which reached Stone in 1771 and promoted the growth of the town at the end of the 18th century;
- Joules' Brewery Warehouse (1881) from where beer was exported by canal to Liverpool and Harwich;
- Curving route of the canal creates unfolding views of the water and canalside developments;
- Star Public House with apparently 16th century origins;
- Views across the town to the tower of St Michael's Church, views southward over the green floodplain of the River Trent;
- Three canal bridges (Star Lock, Workhouse and Newcastle Road);
- Former workhouse (1792-3) and workhouse infirmary (listed grade II);
- Stone-capped red brick wall separates towpath from former workhouse;
- Green verge to towpath and a mostly 'green' boundary to southern side;

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- Semi-rural atmosphere of trees, greenery and wildfowl alongside the canal;
- Canal barge docks, blacksmith's shop, mechanics' workshop and office (grade II);
- Narrow boats moored and travelling on the canal;
- Historic stone floorscape around the locks;
- Tranquil atmosphere;
- Changing character due to recent developments.

Built Characteristics

- Historic canal buildings tend to present a gable end to the canal, modern developments directly face the canal, a fundamental change in the built character of the conservation area;
- With the notable exception of Joules' Brewery Warehouse, canal-related buildings e.g. canal locks, bridges, boatyard buildings are small in scale;
- The canal buildings are typically of one or two storeys, with simple gable-ended roofs and simple vernacular detail, such as plain eaves and simple brick segmental arches to windows;
- Newcastle Road is a primarily residential area containing a variety of house types including terraced and detached;
- The strongly defined terraced patterns of development found elsewhere in the conservation area are only evident along Newcastle Road; instead there is a more dispersed form with isolated and detached buildings, clustered groups, or brief rows;
- Whilst the linear development parallel to the road is continued along Newcastle Road, there are, notably, two rows of small cottages set at right angles to the main road;
- There is a notable variety to the buildings of this zone, in terms of scale and form, nevertheless the common themes of materials remain the dark orange brick, occasionally painted, stone and blue brick, especially in the engineering structures of the canal or for paved surfaces, and tile or sometimes slate roofs.

Picture 8.7 The Boatyard



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Negative features

- Pedestrian links to town centre are inadequately signed or defined;
- The old Fire Station in Crown Street, which holds a visually prominent position at a road junction is vacant and in need of attention;
- Canal building (north side) west of dockyard car park and no. 48 Newcastle Road (north side) are in a poor state of repair;
- Awkward pedestrian access from Stafford Street to the towpath at Star Lock.
- Canal area divorced from the High Street by the Crown Street ring-road.

Character Area 4: North Western residential area

8.15 This character area is almost exclusively residential but includes three public houses, a primary school and St John's Church. A former early 20th century Co-operative building at the junction of Radford Road and Kings Avenue is in the process of being converted to a mixed use development of office, restaurant and flats. The railway runs alongside the area and the former Station building to the north, now a community centre, is included in the conservation area.

8.16 This area was not included in the original 1967 designation of the Stone Conservation Area but was added following a review of the boundary over 20 years later. Since 1996, all the residential properties in this area have been subject to an Article 4 Direction which restricts homeowners' 'permitted development rights'. Further information is contained in the 1996 Article 4 document.

Picture 8.8 Northesk Street



8.17 The area contains relatively well preserved houses built during the second half of the 19th century many of which are adorned with period architectural detail and retain original timber doors, windows, and boundary walls.

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8.18 The 1880 O.S. map shows that Alma Street and Tunley Street had already been developed by that date and, north of the railway, Granville Terrace with the western half of Gower Street (today named The Avenue) were also in place. By the time of the 1901 O.S. map Northesk Street and Kings Avenue (1893) had been built.

8.19 The earlier development of Alma Street and Tunley Street is uniformly terraced and at a much smaller scale than the developments which follow. Doors open directly onto the street and rear gardens are small. These streets were most likely developed after the arrival of the railway c.1850 for workers in the 19th century shoe and boot making trade.

8.20 Northesk Street, Kings Avenue, Granville Terrace and The Avenue are typical late 19th century Victorian town houses. They are set back slightly from the pavement with small front gardens bounded by a low wall, some with railings. The two pairs of roads have rear access via a back road which runs along the length of the street, the back road between Northesk Street and Kings Avenue is wide and well maintained.

8.21 This area also contains one of the few surviving domestic scale shoe workshop buildings in Stone. Surprisingly, this is located at the end of one of the gardens of the higher status town houses, in Granville Terrace.

General Characteristics:

- Level topography beside the railway which emerges from a cutting below Granville Terrace, crosses Station Road, and runs alongside Station Approach;
- An area of predominantly terraced housing development with some detached and semi-detached properties;
- Granville Terrace and The Avenue (c.1880) and Northesk Street and Kings Avenue (c.1895), good examples of Victorian middle class houses;
- Three grade II listed buildings: Stone Railway Station, St John's Church and Christchurch School, Northesk Street;
- Substantial rear access routes between Northesk Street and Kings Avenue and Granville Terrace and The Avenue, bounded by red brick walls at the rear of back gardens;
- Street trees in Kings Avenue and The Avenue, Station Approach is lined with an avenue of trees;
- Trees above railway cutting oppose the frontages of Kings Avenue and Granville Terrace.

Built characteristics

- Red brick with buff brick, terracotta and stone dressings under roofs of blue plain clay tiles is the prevalent building material;
- Although not used on the buildings themselves, many of the front boundary walls are of blue brick with stone copings;
- Predominance of painted timber external joinery i.e. sliding sash windows and panelled doors;
- Generally high survival of exterior architectural details and joinery;
- Prevalence of red (and blue) brick chimney stacks with rows of clay pots that create a lively roofscape;
- The 'tunnel back' building form, with one or two storey outshuts extending in a linear fashion into the rear gardens;

The Character of the Conservation Area 8

Picture 8.9 Detail of front door cases, Northesk Street



- Granville Terrace and The Avenue (c.1880) and Northesk Street and Kings Avenue (c.1895), good examples of Victorian middle class houses;
1. Linear development, Kings Avenue and Northesk Street fronting the railway of earlier date of construction;
 2. Mainly terraced development;
 3. Two storeys in height is common, rarely three storeys;
 4. Pitched gable-ended roofs predominate, occasionally gablets to street;
 5. Granville Terrace and Northesk Street present a great variety in house design reflecting their piecemeal development;
 6. Details include: ornate dormers, two storey canted bays, with some pyramidal roofs on Northesk Street, stone quoins and use of terracotta adornment;
 7. A variety in eaves line also reflects piecemeal development;
 8. The Avenue and Kings Avenue display greater uniformity: piecemeal development is still evident along Kings Avenue and rows appear to have been built in small groups at a time, but there is a strong eaves line to The Avenue;
 9. Ground floor canted bays are common in Granville Terrace and The Avenue;
 10. Some two-storey bays in The Avenue;
 11. Prevalence of ground floor paired windows in Kings Avenue;

8 The Character of the Conservation Area

Picture 8.10 Rare example of three-storey house on Granville Terrace, with buff bricks for quoins and stringcourse



1. Front doors approached up a short flight of steps in a recessed porch;
2. Red brick is prevalent but buff bricks sometimes used as quoins, string courses, or polychromatic lintels;
3. Red or blue brick low front garden walls with gate piers and stone copings, and which historically had cast-iron railings. These enclose small front gardens, many enhanced with low shrubs and greenery, and some with surviving tiled paving;

Picture 8.11 Red and blue brick boundary wall, polychromatic brickwork and gablets in The Avenue



1. Brick (and blue brick) chimney stacks with numerous clay pots;
2. High survival of exterior architectural details and timber joinery;

The Character of the Conservation Area 8

3. Predominantly timber joinery: windows commonly 2 over 2 paned sliding sashes, but with some distinctive variations such as Edwardian sash windows with six panes above a single pane in Northesk Street and Kings Avenue;
 4. Sturdy timber panelled and glazed front doors;
 5. West end of street (nos. 27-33) are smaller in scale and plainer in design, and are back of pavement developments;
- Alma Street and Tunley Street are terraced mid 19th century developments that pre-date the higher status and larger scale adjacent Northesk Street and Kings Avenue;
1. Two storey terraced artisan housing with narrow frontage and minimal garden space;
 2. Prevalence of red brick frontage although several properties have been rendered or painted to the detriment of overall historic appearance;
 3. Rhythmical row of brick chimney stacks;
 4. Notable survival of historic architectural features such as ornate fanlights, dentilled brick eaves, 6 over 6 pane sliding sash windows and sturdy panelled and moulded front doors;
 5. Narrow streets with doors opening directly onto narrow pavements;
 6. Downward incline in Alma Street leads to a stepping down of common eaves line;
 7. With the exception of round-arched front doorways, Alma Street is notable for the absence of external architectural detail.

Picture 8.12 Fanlight in Tunley Street



- Station Road:
 1. Nos 32, 34/36 and 38 are detached and highly individual red brick dwellings of differing designs exhibiting typical late 19th century features such as ground floor canted bay, ornate doorcase, diadem pattern in brickwork and co-axial brick chimney stacks;
 2. Nos 40 to 86 are terraced and set behind small front gardens opening directly onto the road.

8 The Character of the Conservation Area

Negative Features

- Historic timber windows and doors replaced with uPVC or aluminium, particularly in Alma Street and Tunley Street;
- Loss of architectural details such as timber windows, doors and chimneys is eroding the historic character and appearance of the area;
- Loss of iron railings is to the detriment of the area's character and appearance, as are some later replacements that fail to reproduce historic detail;
- Poor quality of the design, materials and scale of modern infill buildings;
- The former Co-operative building, currently undergoing refurbishment, holds a prominent corner site on a rise in the land, and is in need of sensitive re-development;
- Development in the back gardens of Northesk Street and Kings Avenue is beginning to erode the small-scale, tranquil nature of the back service road;
- Scale and design of dormers to rear of properties;
- Modern street lighting columns are out of keeping with the late 19th century character of the houses;
- High traffic speed in Kings Avenue is a safety hazard;
- Lack of enforcement of infringement of planning controls especially the Article 4 Direction;
- Historic character and appearance jeopardised in Northesk Street by no. 16a, a modern infill dwelling;
- Small front gardens on Station Road open directly onto the carriageway creating a hazard to pedestrians and vehicles.

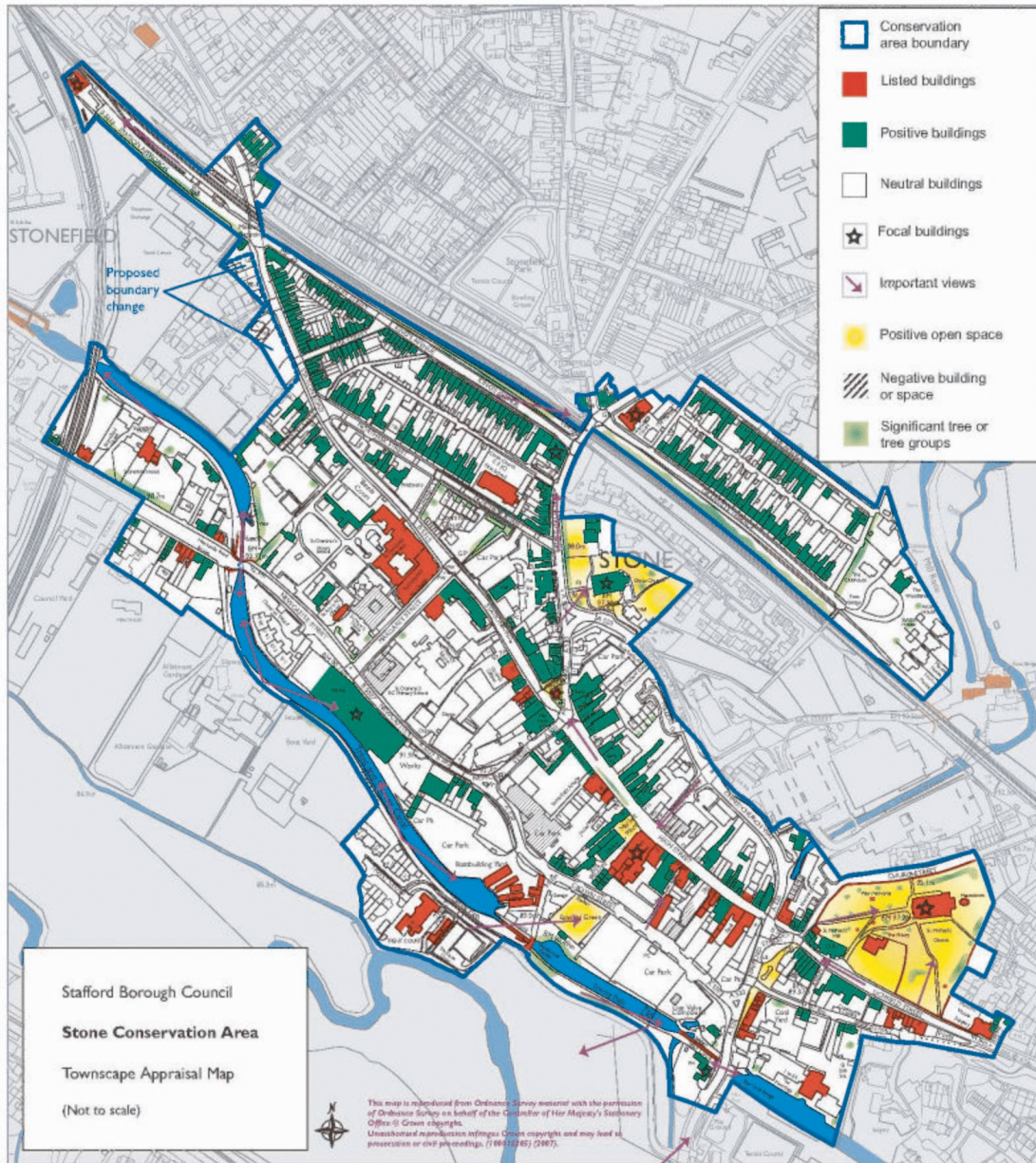
Picture 8.13 Canted bay windows, Northesk Street



The Character of the Conservation Area 8

Townscape Appraisal Map

Map 8.2 Stone Conservation Area Town Appraisal Map



9 Issues

9 Issues

Identification of Issues

9.1 The following issues have been identified by the appraisal process (via extensive survey work) and have been modified to include the views of the local community as part of the preliminary public consultation exercise.

9.2 They provide the basis for the Site Specific Actions in the Management Proposals. These issues will be subject to regular review by the Council and new ones may be added in the future:

- Preventing further loss of architectural detail;
- Consideration of a 'local list';
- Conservation area boundary review;
- Tree management;
- Garish shopfronts;
- Opportunity sites;
- Links between canal and town centre;
- Vacant shops in town centre.

Picture 9.1 Vacant site, Abbey Street



Buildings

- Historic timber windows and doors replaced with uPVC or aluminium;
- Loss of architectural details such as timber windows, doors and chimneys is eroding the historic character and appearance of the area;
- Shopfronts and signage that are insensitive to the special historic character of the conservation area;
- Need to prepare and adopt a 'local list'.

Opportunity Sites

- Site adjacent to Earl St Vincent Square;
- Poor townscape at junction of Crown Street and Newcastle Street (rear of Somerfield);
- Modern development opposite Market Place dilutes historic character and appearance;
- Removal of gravestones from St Michael's churchyard has resulted in a bleak landscape;
- Canal building on north side west of dockyard car park, no. 48 Newcastle Road and the former Malthouse in Adie's Alley are in need of repair;
- Vacant shops and under-used upper storeys.

Public Realm

- Obtrusive overhead wires and wiring on building facades;
- Conservation of historic floorscape;
- Tree management within highways and adjacent to railway;
- Poor links between canal and town centre;
- Standard highways designs to guards, roadmarkings and signs.

Suggestions for Future Action

- Implement the boundary changes outlined in this appraisal;
- Create a list of locally important buildings and a robust policy that can fit into the forthcoming Local Development Framework;
- Need for new guidance on shopfront design to improve the general standards in the town;
- Provide better signage between the town and the canal and improve the amenity of the principal connecting routes such as Adie's Alley;
- Tackle traffic and parking issues;
- Four yearly inspection of areas for contraventions of planning regulations, particularly in Article 4 Direction area.

Picture 9.2 Rear of Somerfield supermarket, Crown Street



10 Introduction

10 Introduction

Format and Derivation

10.1 This management proposal document sets out a mid- to long-term strategy in the form of a series of recommendations and guidelines for the Stone 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.

10.2 Proposals are split into generic and specific actions. The generic ones are tied in with general management principles, which apply across all of Stafford's 29 conservation areas. The specific actions section is informed by the findings of the character appraisal and is specific to the Stone Conservation Area.

Purpose & Legislative Context

10.3 These management proposals set out guidelines by which the special character of Stone Conservation Area can be preserved and enhanced. They will provide a basis for preparing new policies to achieve this.

10.4 The preparation of management proposals 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.

10.5 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 (less than five years old) management proposals local authorities have for their conservation areas. 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 proposals are integral to the character appraisal and an important planning tool. The Council remains committed to their production.

Local Plan & Emerging Local Development Framework

10.6 Current planning policies for Stone, including those governing development and management of change in conservation areas, is laid out in the [Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001](#), adopted in 1998.

10.7 However, the Local Plan will be replaced in the near future by the Local Development Framework (LDF) which is part of the new planning system introduced by the [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#). The character appraisal and management proposals document will sit alongside, and inform, the conservation policies contained within the new LDF and be complementary to its aims of preserving and enhancing Stafford Borough's conservation areas.

Sustainability

10.8 While the above documents are not adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Documents, or any other of the various components of the LDF, their preparation adheres to the principles of sustainability as it underpins the new planning system as a piece of evidence. 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.

Consultation

10.9 In line with the increased emphasis on community engagement in the LDF, as well as the existing policies of Stafford Borough 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. Stafford Borough 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.'*

Monitoring

10.10 Stafford Borough Council will seek to review these documents every five years where possible; 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.

11 Generic Actions

11 Generic Actions

Policy

11.1 It is the Council's duty to preserve and enhance its conservation areas and policies are included in the Local Plan in order to fulfil this duty. Relevant policies for Conservation Areas are covered in Policies E&D18 to 22. Other policies are detailed in Section 2.3 of the character appraisal.

11.2 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 Stafford Borough's conservation areas.

11.3 The Council will endeavour to protect and enhance its conservation areas through:

- The development control process (Policies E&D18 to 20);
- Controlling and encouraging good design principles for new shop fronts and signage (Policies E&D21 & 22);
- 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 where considered necessary);
- 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;
- Create and develop 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.

Conservation and Design Guidance

11.4 General guidance on listed buildings and conservation areas is available from Stafford Borough Council. Other organisations, such as English Heritage or the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings can provide other guidance applying to specific technical issues, such the repair of listed buildings, traditional construction methods and materials.

ACTION: The Council will continue to identify the need for specific guidance on design or conservation issues within its area and prepare appropriate guidance notes.

Development Control Process

11.5 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.

11.6 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.

Generic Actions 11

11.7 Applications concerning land or properties within or close to a conservation area will in most cases be referred to the Conservation Section of Stafford Borough Council. Within the usual period of time for consideration of an application, a conservation specialist will advise the planning officer assigned to the application whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area and whether the application should be supported or refused on conservation grounds.

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

11.9 Consistency of approach to determining planning applications is at the centre of a fair system of controlling change, especially in a conservation area. 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.

11.10 Design and development briefs should be promoted and encouraged as a matter of course on any substantial application in the conservation areas or affecting their setting. A written analysis explaining how the proposal would benefit the character or appearance of the conservation area should be contained in the Design and Access Statement, which, in accordance with CLG Circular 01/06, should support all applications within conservation areas.

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

Enforcement Strategy

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

ACTION: The Council will monitor breaches of planning controls within its conservation areas and take enforcement action where appropriate.

Street Management

11.12 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 Stafford Borough Council.

11.13 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. However, consideration should always be given to the effect that any new introductions to the public realm would have on the character and appearance of the conservation area and every

11 Generic Actions

effort be made to preserve and enhance it. For example, traditional colours should be preferred to more modern shades, careful 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 scheme of public realm replacement from road surfaces through lighting standards and signage to street furniture.

11.14 It is important that the conservation section is consulted at an early stage regarding any proposals to affect material changes to conservation areas. It is often the case that they can bring previous experience, as well as a thorough understanding of the needs of an area, to the process.

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

Promotion & Awareness

11.15 While it is often the Development Control Team and conservation section that deals first hand with planning applications in conservation areas, almost every department in the Council will deal with matters affecting them in some way. It is the responsibility of all employees and Council Members to give regard to the special character or appearance of conservation areas and promote awareness of them to stakeholders. An active Historic Environment Champion (see below) can be an effective way of encouraging understanding across Council departments.

ACTION: The Council will encourage a good understanding of historic environment issues across its departments through such schemes as English Heritage's 'Historic Environment - Local Management' (HELM).

Historic Environment Champions / Parish Councils

11.16 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 Stafford Borough's historic environment and regular liaison with the conservation section.

11.17 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.

ACTION: The Historic Environment Champion will raise the profile of heritage issues within the Council and regularly liaise with the conservation section.

Generic Actions 11

Education / Community Involvement

11.18 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.

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.

Production of Further Guidance / Leaflets

11.19 Additional guidance on specific issues, such as the design of new buildings in conservation areas or the conversion of agricultural or industrial buildings, can be useful for addressing particular aspects of special character that are at risk from incremental change.

ACTION: The Council will prepare and issue additional design guidance and leaflets as and when appropriate.

Statutory and Local List

11.20 While many of Stafford Borough's historic buildings are included on the statutory list, some others do not fit the strict criteria for listing and are not of national importance, but are considered important in the local context.

ACTION: In the preparation of the Local Development Framework, the Council will consider a policy to compile a list of buildings and structures of local architectural or historic interest (i.e. a "local list"), and appropriate policies for their retention and improvement.

Buildings At Risk

11.21 There are six entries in the *English Heritage* Buildings At Risk Register in Stafford Borough which covers only grade I and II* listed buildings. Stafford Borough Council is compiling its own list of Buildings at Risk, including all grades of listed building, within the Borough.

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

ACTION: The Council will continue to monitor the condition of its listed buildings on a regular (5-yearly) basis and consider serving repairs and urgent works notices where appropriate.

12 Specific Actions - Stone Conservation Area

12 Specific Actions - Stone Conservation Area

12.1 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 3 'Introduction'), the following actions relate specifically to Stone Conservation Area.

Conservation Area Boundary Review

12.2 After the completion of a thorough survey of the Stone Conservation Area, a character appraisal was written. This concluded that a minor deletion from the existing conservation area would improve the extent to which the designation accurately reflects the special character of Stone.

12.3 Possible extension of the conservation area was also considered, in particular the area of terraced housing to the north of the railway including Victoria Street, Albert Street, Alexandra Street and Edward Street. Despite its connection to the historical development of the town, this area was not deemed to merit conservation area status because of the average quality of the architecture in comparison to the houses in Northesk Street, Kings Avenue, Granville Terrace and The Avenue (Alma Street and Tunley Street already represents this low status form of terraced housing), its disconnection from the main body of the existing conservation area and the danger of diluting the overall special interest of the conservation area which, in the main, is focused on the town centre and canal.

12.4 The proposed deletion is an area on the south side of Station Road which contains modern houses built since designation of the conservation area. The proposed boundary change is shown on the townscape appraisal map.

ACTION: To designate a new revised boundary for the Conservation Area.

Site & Building Enhancements

12.5 While there are a good number of positive buildings in Stone, both listed and unlisted, this is offset by some inappropriate new development which has been introduced into the Stone Conservation Area, notably in High Street and alongside the canal.

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

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

ACTION: The Council will continue to encourage good design and the use of traditional materials and encourage suitable schemes to enter into the South Staffordshire Design Awards.

Shopfronts

12.6 The Stone Conservation Area contains a number of shops, many with historic shopfronts. In some cases, poorly designed shop fronts with little regard for the host building and the street scene spoil the historic character and appearance of a building or street.

Specific Actions - Stone Conservation Area 12

12.7 Occasionally, a simple modern shop front may be more appropriate than a reproduction 19th century design. However, these should still relate to the upper storeys of the building and the street scene as a whole, and follow the basic principles governing the historically established relationship between the fascia, glazing, pilasters and stall riser, as well as the use of appropriate colour, scale, materials, and signage.

ACTION: When considering the replacement of a shop front, owners should follow the advice contained in the Borough Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance entitled "New & Old Shopfronts – good for business Boroughwide".

ACTION: When considering planning applications for new shop fronts, the Council will be mindful of Policy E&D22 in the Local Plan (and any subsequent relevant policy in the emerging Local Development Framework).

ACTION: The removal of historic shop fronts will be resisted, and their repair and restoration encouraged.

Advertisement Control

12.8 All outdoor advertisements affect the appearance of the building or neighbourhood where they are displayed. The visual appearance of the Stone Conservation Area suffers from roller shutters and some garish advertisements including banners and A-boards which may not be authorized.

ACTION: The Council will ensure that all proposed advertisements accord with Policy E&D21 of the Local Plan and the subsequent relevant policies that will be adopted in the forthcoming LDF.

ACTION: The Council will prepare further guidance regarding appropriate design of advertisements within the Conservation Area.

ACTION: The Council will consider making an "Area of Special Advertisement Control"

Amenity Space

12.9 Stone benefits from a number of areas of public open space within the Conservation Area. The areas should be maintained and enhanced due to the contribution that they make to the appearance and character of the Conservation Area. Also, an understanding of how these areas are used at different times of the day and week (particularly the three town 'squares') should inform any enhancement schemes.

ACTION: The Council will seek to maintain and improve its open areas and pathways.

Traffic Signs, Street Lights and the Public Realm

12.10 Modern signs and notices often spoil the visual attractiveness of the Conservation Area. While traffic signs are obviously necessary, many are poorly sited and there may be an over-provision of them. Also, the character appraisal has identified the lack of a cohesive style of street lamp in the Conservation Area. In conservation terms lighting columns should be of a height and design based on local historical evidence and it would be ideal a uniform style were introduced across the area.

12 Specific Actions - Stone Conservation Area

12.11 New items of street furniture, such as CCTV cameras or waste bins, should also respect the historic character of the Conservation Area in terms of design, scale and its finished appearance. Street lamps and camera posts should not be so tall that they visually compete with the roofline of historic buildings or with the crowns of trees, which are important elements in this conservation area. All new features of the public realm should ideally be constructed of traditional materials and/ or finished in traditional painted colour schemes and based upon evidence of local historical detail.

ACTION: The Council will seek to continue funding public realm improvements and create a coordinated approach to refurbishment across the conservation area, in line with the principles set out in English Heritage's latest 'Streets For All' publication.

Quality of Pavement Surface

12.12 Paving and surface materials throughout the Stone Conservation Area are generally modern but there are discrete areas of historic stone and brick paving which should be protected in their own right and form the basis for guiding new design.

ACTION: The Council will seek to restore the traditional appearance of the streetscape and consult the Conservation Section on future enhancements to pavements and footpaths in the Stone Town Conservation Area.

Trees and Landscape

12.13 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 Authority.

ACTION: The Council will continue to monitor and maintain its trees within the Conservation Area and ensure that funding is set aside for the costs involved in remedial works or replacement.

Grants - Assessment of Existing and Potential for New Schemes

12.14 Stafford Borough has very limited funding available to encourage repair and reinstatement of the built historic environment. There are currently no local or national grant schemes (such as Townscape Heritage Initiatives) specific to Stone.

ACTION: The Council will consider relevant partnership grant schemes that could preserve or enhance the character of Stone Conservation Area.

Buildings at Risk/Urgent Works Notices

12.15 None of the six Buildings at Risk (BAR) identified in the English Heritage Register for Stafford Borough are within the Stone Conservation Area. However, seven buildings are considered 'vulnerable' in Stafford Borough Council's own emerging BAR register.

ACTION: The Council will encourage appropriate maintenance of historic buildings, and where necessary use its powers to serve urgent works or repairs notices.

Specific Actions - Stone Conservation Area 12

Archaeology

12.16 Stone has a rich history from Saxon times through the rise and fall of a medieval Augustinian priory to the present day. Much of the area is likely to contain valuable below ground archaeological evidence of former activities and uses. Many of the standing buildings have also developed through a series of changes dating back as far as the 17th century. Detailed archaeological analysis can add to our understanding of the town's past.

ACTION: where proposed development within the Conservation Area would affect sites or buildings of potential archaeological interest, there will be a requirement to carry out an appropriate archaeological evaluation or record.

13 Monitoring

13 Monitoring

13.1 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 Local Development Framework 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 management proposals.

13.2 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.

13.3 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.

13.4 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. This photographic record could also be a useful tool for supporting potential enforcement action against breaches of planning and listed building control.