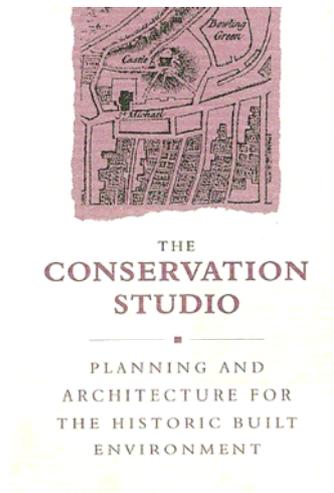


Stafford Conservation Area

**Stafford Borough Council**

# **STAFFORD CONSERVATION AREA**

## **CHARACTER APPRAISAL**



**November 2011**





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## **1 STATEMENT OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

Stafford is a large market town and the county town of Staffordshire, located to the north of the West Midlands conurbation in the rural heart of England. It is a busy commercial town with lively mixed usage set within an historic layout that has been in place since early medieval times. The main wide shopping street that runs from north to south through the centre of the town, with a Market Square and civic buildings in the centre, is the heart of the Conservation Area. Within this and the surrounding streets the town has grown and developed at key stages in its history. This has resulted in a rich diversity of buildings in the streetscene, which includes medieval churches, a Tudor townhouse, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century hotels and pubs, and late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century shops.

The most important features are the continuous rows of two, three and occasionally four storey buildings along the central streets, set close to the pavement, and interspersed with the entrances to narrow lanes and alleyways. The buildings are of a relatively modest size compared to many modern town centres and the historic character is underlined by the vertical emphasis of the building frontages, a characteristic created by the buildings being set on narrow plots. Architectural features such as timber sash windows with small panes also help create a vertical prominence in the streetscape.

The tightly packed building form in the centre of the Conservation Area is contrasted by the generous open spaces in the Conservation Area found in Market Square, St Mary's churchyard and Victoria Park. The combination of these different layouts signifies the complex intertwining of uses, appearances and building types that are characteristic of a market and county town.

Stafford has retained good examples of its historic character from key stages in its development since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but has also seen a good deal of development in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the large Guildhall Shopping Centre. New buildings and modern shopfronts have, to some extent, compromised the historic character of the town, but the essential 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century historic character is still predominant.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

This Conservation Area Appraisal was written by The Conservation Studio on behalf of Stafford Borough Council. It was prepared in August 2007 and was followed by a process of community engagement, which informed the content of the document. The document was then revised by Stafford Borough Council, to take into account major development works carried out between 2009 and 2011.

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.

### 2.2 Planning policy context

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.

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;
- 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.



St Mary's Church

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 Statement 5: Planning for 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.

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

- Stafford Borough Conservation Strategy for the Historic Environment, 1996 (SBC);
- New & Old Shopfronts, 2000, Stafford Borough Planning Guidance (SBC);
- Stafford Town Centre Vision, Urban Design Framework, September 2002 (SBC);
- Conservation within the Highway: Structures of Historic Importance, May 2004 (SCC);
- Draft Staffordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation 2006 (SCC).



Market Place and Shire Hall

### **2.3 Purpose of the appraisal**

This appraisal defines the special architectural and historic interest for which the Stafford 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 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.

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 could be included within the Local Development Framework.

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

### **2.4 Community involvement**

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

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

The consultation began with the notification of key stakeholders and members of the public in Stafford at the beginning of the appraisal process. It was followed by a public meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2007, which was advertised in local newspapers and on the Council website. Posters were also displayed in public places. The meeting included a walkabout covering most of Stafford town centre 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 various representatives of the Borough Council and local interest groups, as well as some members of the public.

Following the meeting, the outcomes were discussed by Stafford Borough Council officers and The Conservation Studio and some questionnaire responses were returned. The first draft of this character appraisal was prepared in August 2007 in the light of comments received from the people of Stafford. Subsequently, a six week period of full public consultation was held over this draft document and some revisions were made. The document was subsequently amended by Stafford Borough Council, at the request of Senior Borough Council Officers, and to take into account major development works within the proposed extension, carried out between 2009 and 2011.

### 3 STAFFORD CONSERVATION AREA

#### 3.1 Designation

The Stafford Conservation Area was designated on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1971 by Staffordshire County Council. The Stafford Conservation Area encompasses the town centre, with two early medieval churches, public houses, shops and civic buildings including the Shire Hall; and Victoria Park, through which runs the River Sow.

Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The 1990 Act defines a conservation area as “*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”.

#### 3.2 Activities and uses

Stafford is a large commercial settlement with a substantial civic role as the County Town of Staffordshire. It is surrounded by large areas of residential properties, particularly on the main A34 and A449 trunk roads to the north and south of the town. Light industrial areas border the commercial centre, particularly in the north towards Stone. The town also has an ever-growing student population with Stafford College and Stafford University both established there. Furthermore, Victoria Park and its riverside setting provide a large leisure area next to the mainline railway station that provides good links to other parts of the country.



Stafford College

With a population of close to 65,000 in the 2001 census, Stafford is a large town with a variety of activities and uses:

- The central part of the Conservation Area is the town centre, with two churches, a variety of nationwide chains and other independent local shops, offices, banks and several public houses/restaurants;
- The western section of the Conservation Area includes Victoria Park, a large green open space that stretches along the banks of the River Sow and includes a bowling green, aviary, a paddling pool and children's play areas. Next to the park stands Stafford College and the Crown Court buildings;
- Eastern section includes some smaller shops and businesses;
- Large civic buildings mark the settlement's status as the County Town of Staffordshire. Some of these buildings form important groups of historic buildings in the Conservation Area as well as providing important resources for the local population;
- Southern section of the Conservation Area is mainly commercial and civic and extends beyond the River Sow into the Parish of Forebridge and the neighbouring area which has a more suburban residential character;
- Residential properties are largely found on the outskirts of the Conservation Area although some mainly mixed use new blocks have been built along the banks of the river opposite Victoria Park. There is potential to redevelop the car parks within and on the periphery of the Conservation Area.



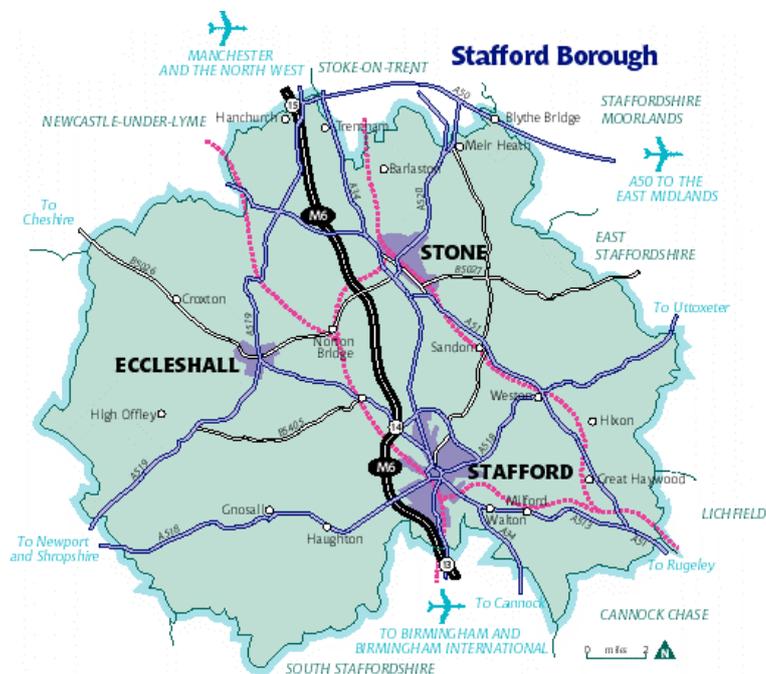
Victoria Park

## 4 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

### 4.1 Location

Stafford town is an urban location between Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent, in the centre of the county of Staffordshire. This part of the West Midlands is set between The Potteries in the north and the Black Country in the south with rural Staffordshire and Shropshire beyond lying to the west. To the east is further rural landscape characterised by hilly terrain leading through the ancient Cannock Chase Forest towards Cannock and Rugeley as well as the National Forest towards Burton-on-Trent and the Derbyshire hills beyond.

The town is served by a network of trunk roads, most notably the A449 which leads south to Wolverhampton and the A34 between Walsall and Stoke-on-Trent. Other major transport infrastructure in the area includes the M6 motorway that bypasses Stafford to the west and the mainline railway. Stafford is, therefore, very well connected to other parts of the country.



### 4.2 Topography & Geology

Stafford lies in a slight hollow with rising ground surrounding it on the confluence of the Rivers Penk and Sow. It sits on glacial gravel and sand surrounded by alluvial marshland with Keuper Marl (clay) in the surrounding countryside. In addition to the clay and gravel, the geology of the area features a red sandstone which has historically been used in the construction of walls and some buildings in the area.

The town is surrounded on the west and south by the River Sow. The streams and marshes to the east, although mostly drained or running under the modern ring road, almost enclose the town as an island. The introduction of a large transport infrastructure in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has led to drainage and culverting which has in turn lessened the visual impact and relationship of the water courses to the town. The town's name comes from the Old English "staeth" meaning "landing place", and "ford" referring to a crossing point. This highlights the importance of the rivers and marshland in defining the early settlement.



River Sow

The position of the settlement next to a river on a shallow hillside running into the valley floor has encouraged the development of a series of straight roads, including Gaolgate Street and Greengate Street running down towards the river with a network of shorter roads, alleyways and passages interconnecting with them. The medieval walls of the old town followed the edge of the gravel that led down to the river and streams. The walls encircled the ancient town or “burh”.

To the west, the ground falls towards the river which flows northwards and bisects Victoria Park. Southwards the ground maintains a level as Bridge Street and Lichfield Road head out of town on the modern ring road. The river is canalised and tucked below the level of the roads, largely out of view.

#### **4.3 Landscape setting**

Stafford lies in a mainly urban landscape setting, although there are the remains of marshy open land to the east and large areas of rural land lie further afield. The Stafford Conservation Area covers the main street and town centre with a mixed urban character. Development has also spread out of the town, surrounding it on all sides and, therefore, Stafford has lost some of its earlier sense of enclosure as a walled, rural County Town. The marshes to the east have prevented development beyond the ring road, preserving some elements of the sense of earlier containment.

The town of Stafford sits in a landscape setting that has been replaced by an urban townscape since at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century, although enclosed fields continued to exist on the land abutting the town up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In summary, the landscape setting of Stafford has the following key characteristics:

- Mainly level riverside location. The landscape around the town is relatively flat although it does rise towards the parish church and drops to the river in the west and south. The land to the east has been built up with modern road construction and the north has always been on slightly higher ground;
- The long views across the River Sow confer a spacious feeling to the setting of Victoria Park, which contrasts with the tightly built form and tall buildings of the commercial centre;
- Early field boundaries lost through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century developments;
- Few large groups of trees, except for some in Victoria Park and lining the banks of the river.

## **5 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **5.1 Archaeology**

Stafford has a wealth of archaeology and excavations during the 1970s revealed evidence of Romano-British activity in the area of Clarke Street. The late Saxon settlement was defined by natural limits (River Sow and King's Pool) and in the south east (Tipping Street and Eastgate Street) is evidence of early medieval settlement and structures including an 8<sup>th</sup> century pottery kiln. The area is likely to have been the central potters' area. Excavations at Tipping Street and to the rear of St. Chad's Church revealed evidence of extensive pottery production with 'Stafford ware' first identified and trade links established with London, Winchester and Norwich. Following the occupation of England by Norman forces in 1066 documentary sources suggest that a castle was built at Broad Eye although to date little archaeological evidence has been recovered to support this.

Excavations at the eastern end of North Walls indicate a degree of abandonment during the fourteenth century within the town defences. This is evidenced by paleoenvironmental evidence indicating episodes of waterlogging possibly linked to the worsening climatic situation during this period.

Although there are no Scheduled Monuments within the boundary of the Conservation Area, several lie close by, most notably Stafford Castle. Some evidence of the old town walls do remain, such as the 'East Gate', Eastgate Street adjacent the ring road. Evidence of early occupation within the town is offered through finds that have been made, such as an intact Roman pot that was found at 10 Market Square in 1961. Around St Mary's Church, Late Saxon strata, a baking oven and evidence of metal working have also been found.

It is thought that Stafford has one of the few Late Saxon and Norman settlements to survive beneath an English town and is probably the best surviving in the Midlands. However, much of the evidence may have been lost during the development of the Guildhall Shopping Centre in the 1980s.

### **5.2 Historical development**

Stafford has a rich and well documented history. Around 700 AD St Bertelin established a church here. The early wooden church, on which a chapel was subsequently built (circa 1000 AD) stood in the centre of town, next to the current site of the Parish Church of St Mary's.

Stafford was officially established by 913 AD when it was made into a burh (a fortified settlement later known as a "borough") by Aethelfled, the Lady of the Mercians. The area had been subject to numerous invasions from Vikings until they were finally repulsed by the Saxons at the Battle of Tettenhall in 910 AD. The town became the centre of Aethelfled's control over Mercia due to its easily defended terrain (the town lay on a gravel island bounded by the River Sow and marshes). At this time the eastern limits of the town may have been along the present line of Tipping and Eastgate Streets.

Stafford developed as a commercial centre with a royal mint and market, and was at the centre of a major pottery industry from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century Stafford was an important administrative centre and became the shire town of the county. In 1066 a royal motte and bailey castle was built, probably in the Broadeye area to the

west of the town. By 1086 it had been replaced with a new timber fortress just over a mile to the west of the town on a more strategic hillside site.

The Domesday Survey mentions the town walls for the first time and these followed the same path that is visible today: North Walls, South Walls, Mill Bank, Tenterbanks and Chell Road. The walls had four gates: the East Gate, the South or Green Gate, a gate at Broadeye and a North or Gaol Gate. Also mentioned in the Survey is a mill valued at four shillings which may have been on the site of the Town Mill to the south east of the town on the River Sow. Agriculture was the primary occupation of the townspeople and the surrounding fields extended into what is now the town centre. At this time there were 128 houses in Stafford.

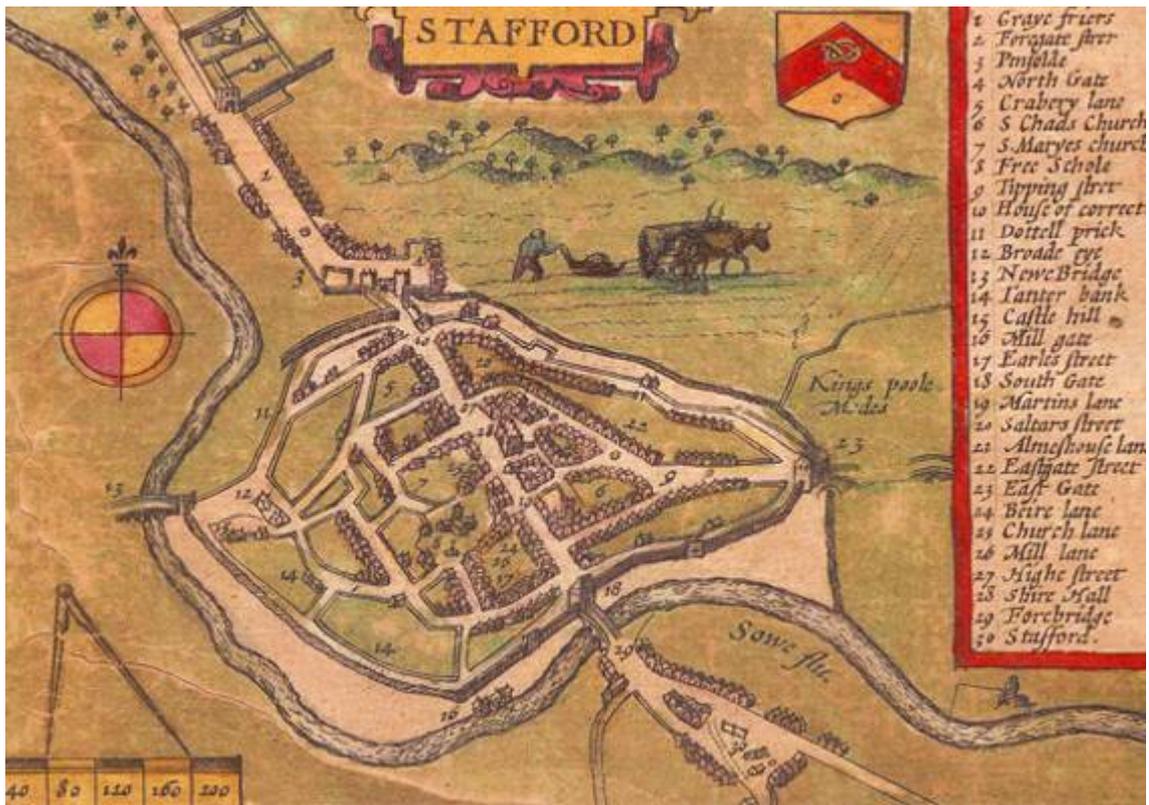
Stafford continued to expand and a market charter was granted in 1175. The Church of St Mary was built in circa.1190 next to the site of the earlier Saxon church. This was approximately 50 years after the Bishop of Lichfield had built St Chad's in the late Norman style, a short distance to the east. St Mary's was a Collegiate Church and housed a College of canons or priests endowed by the King. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century suburbs grew outside the walls, in Foregate to the north and later Forebridge to the south. Many religious institutions were also established in these areas, including a Franciscan Friary (Grey Friars) and an Augustinian Friary (Black Friars) in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

From the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the town layout of a wide central street connecting the north and south walls, referred to as the high street, with a market place halfway along it and parish churches on either side of the street, was established. During the medieval period the town occupied most of the space defined by its defences with shops, residences and backplots defined by long linear boundaries creating burgage plots and the core of the medieval street pattern is still partially visible today. Industry was carried out within the town and upon its outskirts. The more noisome or potentially dangerous crafts such as tanning, pottery production and metal working tended to be carried out without the town defences. These include dying with the name 'Tenterbanks' suggesting the location of racks for drying dyed cloth along the banks of the River Sow.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> century a guild for shoemakers was established, although the manufacture of protective headwear seems to have been the principal industry at this time. The capping industry declined in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the priory, friaries and college church were dissolved. The period saw houses falling into decay. Stafford lost the summer assizes to Wolverhampton due to having no adequate venue. By the early sixteenth century the small suburbs were developing along the main routes into the town as indicated on the later plan of the town by John Speed (1610).

The economic situation in Stafford improved in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A Shire Hall was built in the market place, reinforcing Stafford's place as an important administrative centre. The return of the assizes confirmed its status as the county town and a new gaol was also built close to the north gate around this time. Most inhabitants were "men of trade or mechanics", the richest being retailers. In 1622 the census returned 1,560 inhabitants, one quarter of which were "poor".

Following the English Civil War, when Stafford was used to imprison Royalists, the town walls were mostly fallen in and the appearance of the traditionally fortified town began to change. Other industries were also established at this time, such as salt production, which continued to harvest salt beds at locations around Stafford until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The salty qualities of the local water were harnessed by the foundation of the Royal Brine Baths in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

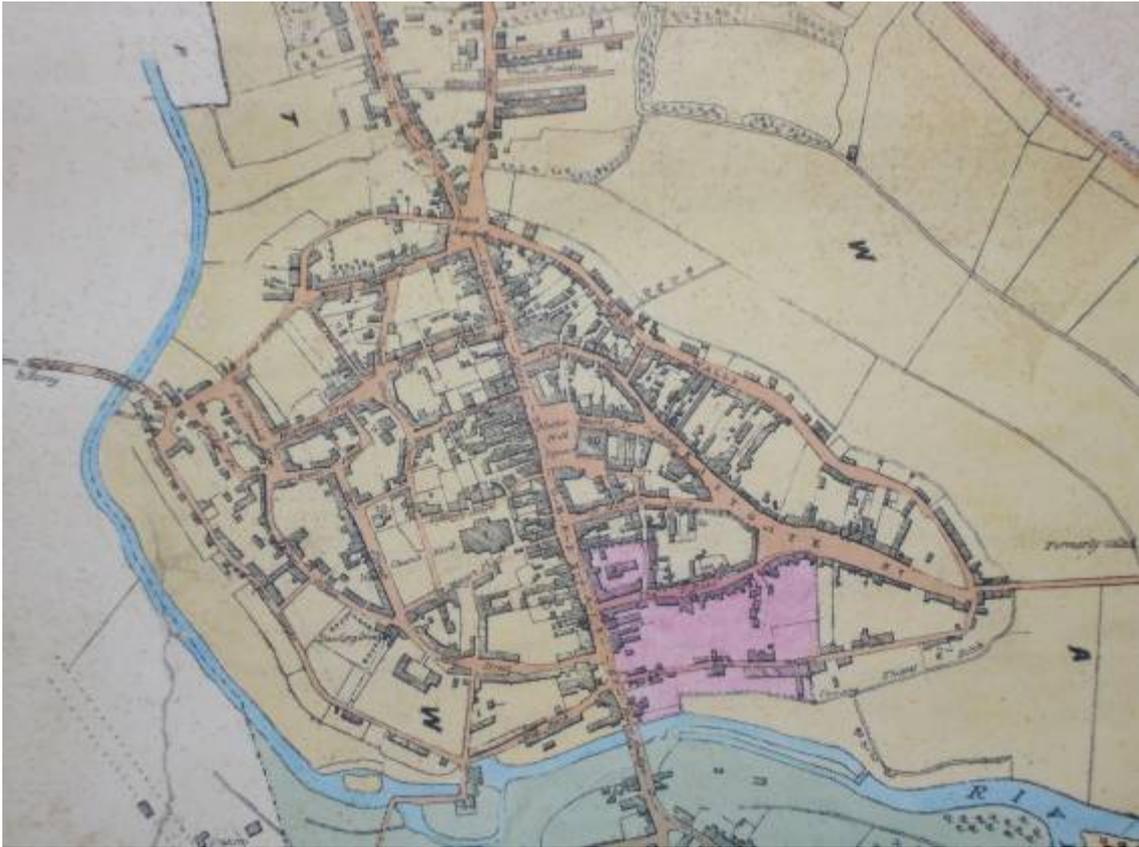


Speed's Map of 1610

The buildings from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in the town show a variety in their scale and, therefore, the status of their inhabitants. The more lavish houses, often over three storeys were concentrated on Greengate and Gaolgate Streets. The outlying streets, such as Eastgate Street, often had gaps with no buildings as well as small single storey houses with attics. The first brick built building was constructed in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century (The Swan Hotel) and this saw the eventual progression away from the timber framed construction with wattle and daub panels that had previously characterised the building methods of the area.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the prosperity of the town grow again and wealthy families were established, such as the Chetwynds of Brocton Hall. Defoe noted that the town had "grown rich by the clothing trade". Some large, fine houses were built in the town, such as Chetwynd House, which was became the home of William Horton, the local shoe manufacturing pioneer. The five shoe manufacturers in the town in 1786 rose to 20 in 1818 and by 1834 the population of 8,500 contained 800 employed in shoe making. The town prospered with the construction of a new Shire Hall, County Gaol and many buildings on the main street received new brick facades. The northern end of the town was developed into an suburb for the shoe manufacturing industry; most notably Lotus, which closed in the late 1990s.

In 1796 Broadeye windmill was constructed, allegedly using some materials auctioned from the demolished Elizabethan shire hall. This coincided with a period of instability for agriculture as the French Wars caused price fluctuations. However, the effects of the downturn were alleviated in Stafford by the diverse goods that they produced and the improving transport links (canal, railways) that came over the next century.



Stafford in 1838

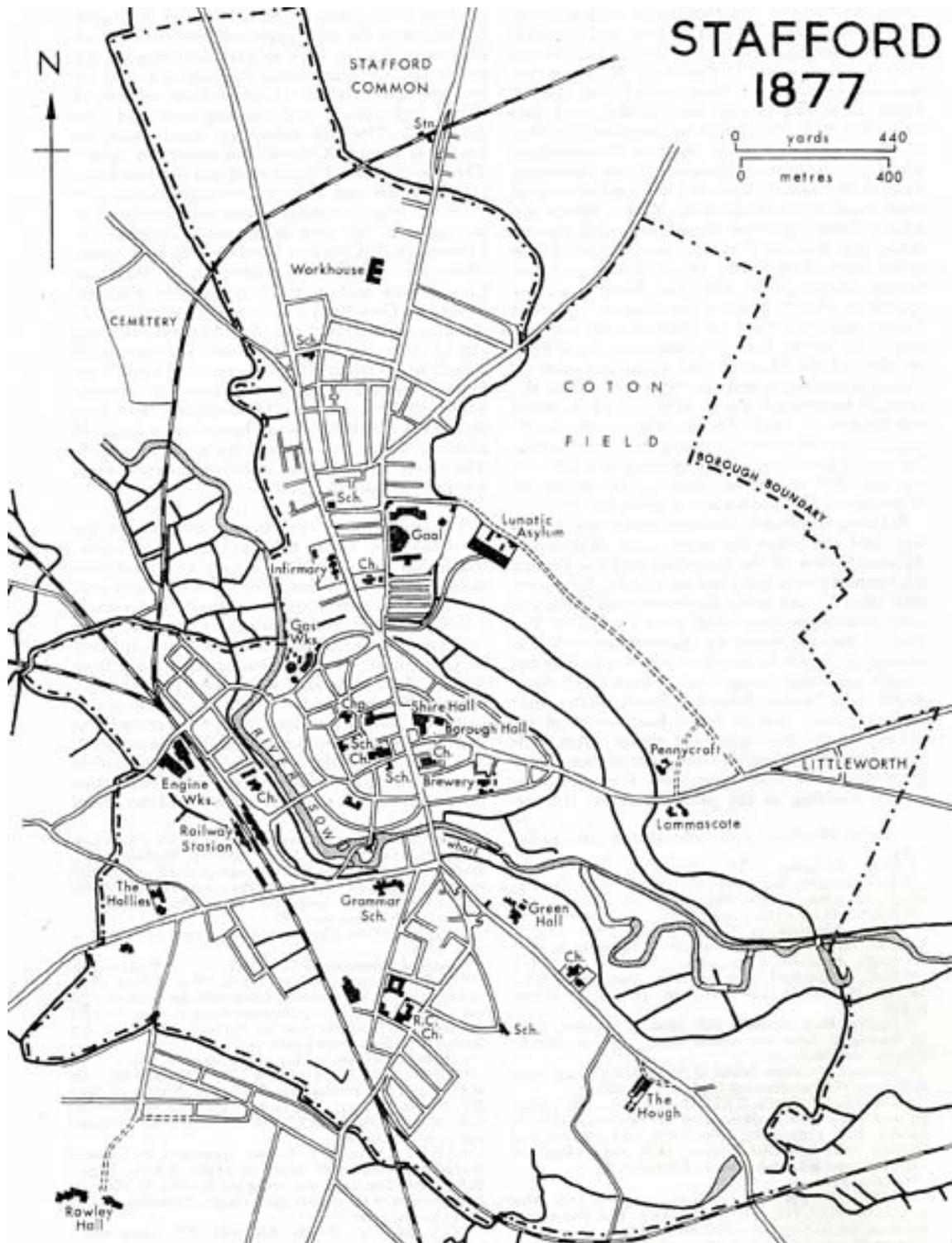
Stafford was also a staging point on the route north from Wolverhampton and the local inns prospered. By 1834 over twenty coaches passed through daily although other transport innovations had arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The canalised River Sow had been connected with the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal by 1812 and was used for commerce. Later, the Grand Junction Railway opened in 1837, connecting with Stafford and spelling the end of the coaching trade. The new transport infrastructure saw the town grow from around 4,000 in 1801 to 10,000 in 1851 to 14,500 in 1871. Stafford became a flourishing centre for trade with good communications.

In 1834 the main high street was described as “commodious and well paved... with many well-stocked shops and several excellent inns and spacious mansions”. The other streets began to be infilled with working class housing and the town had completely lost its walled appearance by 1820 when all the gatehouses had been demolished. During the 1860s there was a rapid expansion of the town with houses and factories built in the surrounding farmland. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Stafford had become more industrialised with new electrical works such as Siemens being established in the town and by 1900 Stafford had 15,000 inhabitants. From the 1890s, the County Council rejuvenated Stafford as a civic centre by extensively rebuilding the Martin Street area.

The civic character of the town grew and in 1908 the Victoria Pleasure Grounds were opened between the river and the railway station for the enjoyment of the townspeople. These were extended in 1909 and 1930 to form Victoria Park as the town’s population grew. From the late 1920s council estates were being built around the town. By the 1940s the shoe industry was replaced as the dominant activity in the town by the

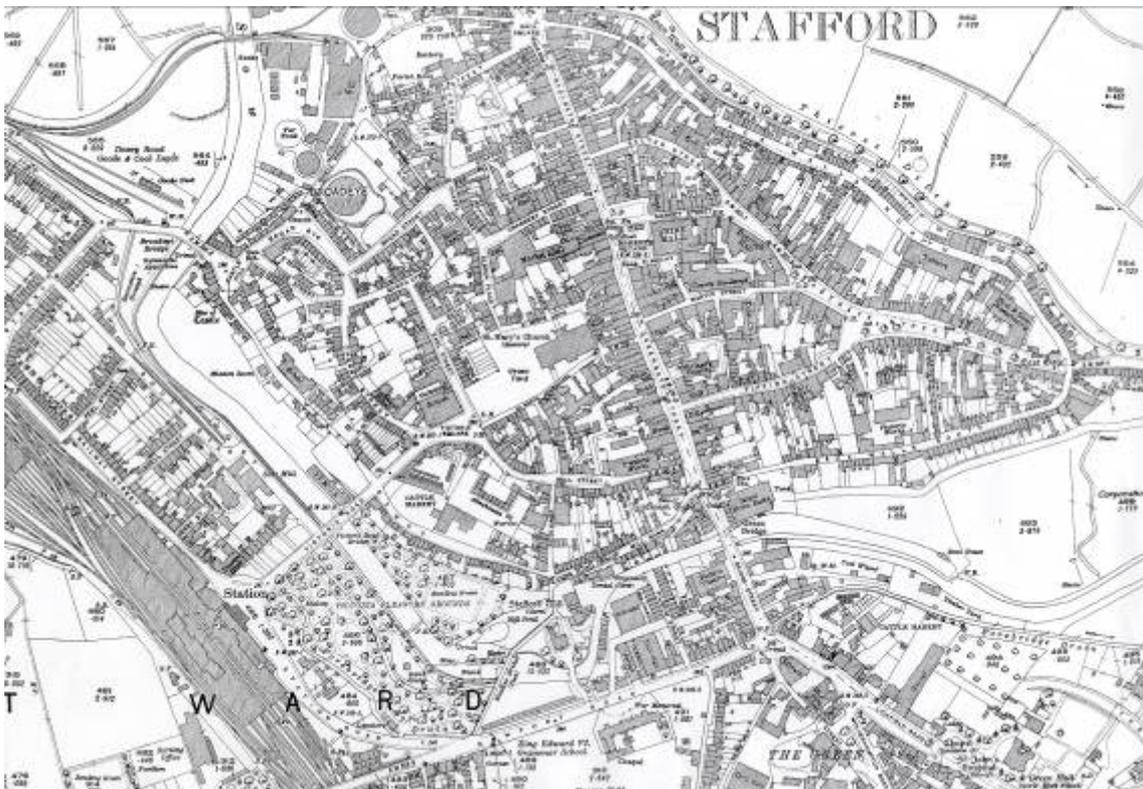
English Electric Co. Ltd. Whereas in 1934 there were 2,700 employed in shoe making in the town, this figure dropped to 1,200 in 1947.

The access road to the M6 motorway opened in 1962 and further link roads and a ring road were built in the 1970s, along with more industrial estates. In 1970 brine-pumping was banned due to it causing subsidence and salt-making ceased in the town. A modern shopping centre was built on the Guildhall site in the 1980s.





Ordnance Survey Map 1881



Ordnance Survey Map 1923

## 6 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Layout and spaces

The streets of Stafford have existed on their current routes since early medieval times and the main features of the layout can be summarised as follows:

- Location within the historic town walls which were in place by the 11<sup>th</sup> century, featuring a broad, straight central road connecting the sites of the north and south gates.
- Modern roads also follow historically established lines: the former town walls, along the edge of the River Sow and the path of an Iron Age track that once connected with Lammascote Road running east out of the settlement.
- Narrower winding roads run away from the wide central street. The land rises very gradually towards the parish church which is surrounded by a large churchyard and is probably the site of the centre of the Saxon settlement.
- All the roads have almost continuous frontages and are mainly commercial and civic buildings. Around the centre the buildings rise to three and occasionally four storeys, but the scale of the buildings drops away in the outer streets to predominantly two storeys.
- The townscape is broken up by some significant open spaces such as the Market Square, Victoria Park and St Mary's churchyard.
- Other major historic thoroughfares: Earl Street/ Water Street to the west, and Salter Street/ Eastgate Street to the east, snake around the town centre.



Eastgate Street

### 6.2 Relationship of Buildings to Spaces

A critical component of Stafford's special character is the relationship of the buildings within the town to the spaces around them. In Gaolgate Street and Greengate Street, two, three and four storey brick buildings stand on the edge of the pavement, punctuated by the openings of the narrower connecting streets and by the large Market Square. There is a spacious feeling, despite the scale of the buildings, which is less in evidence in the smaller side streets.

The connecting streets, such as Crabbery Street, Mill Street and Salter Street are narrower but still lined with buildings. These, too, have no front gardens but are positioned directly on the pavement. However, some of them, particularly those in Salter Street and Eastgate Street have long rear gardens which create some less visible space within the Conservation Area.



Salter Street

Other open spaces behind Gaolgate Street, such as St Mary's Garden of Remembrance, break up the continuity of buildings, which is also in this case relieved by the very different appearance of the large medieval parish church. The modern buildings around the church are less tall than some of the historic structures on the main streets although they still manage to impose themselves on the streetscene.

Further west, large imposing civic buildings are interspersed with smaller domestic buildings and open space such as the forecourt to the County Court building and the front gardens to the St Martin Noel's Almshouses. Beyond the busy modern highway of Tenterbanks the relationship between buildings and spaces changes completely. The wide open space of Victoria Park is filled with carefully placed groups of flower beds, trees, benches and smaller buildings such as pavilions and bandstands. All these are clustered around the River Sow and the watercourse is the central defining feature of the area, rather than lines of buildings as is the case in other parts of the Conservation Area.



Sir Martin Noel's Almshouses

### 6.3 Landmarks and focal points

Landmark and focal buildings make a significant, although not necessarily historic or even positive, impact on the streetscene within the Conservation Area. The principal landmarks and focal buildings in the Stafford Conservation Area from north to south are:

- Guildhall
- Shire Hall
- Borough Hall/ Gatehouse Theatre
- East Gate
- Broadeye Windmill
- 41a Eastgate Street
- Ancient High House
- St Mary's Church
- St Chad's Church
- Former County Educational Buildings (Chambers Public House)
- Stafford College, Tenterbanks
- Chetwynd House
- Sir Martin Noel's Almshouses
- Victoria Bridge
- Civic Centre
- The Picture House
- Apollo Cinema
- Old Library
- Chetwynd Centre



Ancient High House

Focal points:

- River Sow and Victoria Park and its trees;
- Market Square;
- St Mary's Garden of Remembrance;
- Martin Street and County Buildings.

#### 6.4 Views and vistas

Stafford is partly characterised by its riverside location and there are extensive views across and along the River Sow. However, the majority of the Conservation Area is in an urban setting and the key views are along the building line of shop frontages and are often terminated by landmark buildings. Due to the relatively flat topography there are no extensive views out of the town from within the Conservation Area.

The key views and vistas in the Stafford Conservation Area from north to south:

- Along the street frontages throughout the Conservation Area
- Across Market Square to Shire Hall
- Along Martin Street to St Mary's Church spire
- From St Mary's Place into Church Lane
- From Stafford College to Broadeye Windmill
- From War Memorial to St Mary's Church
- South along Earl Street to Almshouses
- In both directions along River Sow from Victoria Road bridge
- West from Friars Walk across open space to Chetwynd Centre.



View from Martin Street to St Mary's Church tower

## 6.5 Green spaces, trees, boundaries and planting

The absence of trees in the main commercial centre is in marked contrast to the mature groups of trees in Victoria Park and the neighbouring areas along the river banks. This reinforces the difference between the character areas: a tightly packed, largely treeless commercial core surrounded by spacious, generously stocked open spaces. There are a few exceptions to the lack of trees within the commercial core. Some mature specimens to be found along the southern end of Eastgate Street, scattered around St Mary's churchyard and in Market Square.



St Mary's Grove

Very few buildings have individual gardens, although a few boundary treatments survive. The main one of note is Sir Martin Noel's Almshouses which have a substantial front garden with shrubbery and no boundary wall, leaving a clear view of the impressive 16<sup>th</sup> century stone building. Others include the churchyard and chapel walls, and brick wall and cast iron railing treatments around Victoria Park. Furthermore, in some cases rear enclosure walls may survive although these are not always visible from the street.

The green open space is instead found in public areas: Victoria Park, the riverside walk and the Garden of Remembrance. These are well maintained with modest amounts of bedding and trees. The largest and most densely packed group of trees is on the western side of the river in Victoria Park.

## 7 STREETScape

### 7.1 Public realm

The public realm in Stafford Conservation Area has a mixture of modern and traditional elements, very few of which are older than late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Stafford has been subject to a series of improvement works since the mid 1990s which have had a considerable impact on the appearance of the area albeit with varying levels of success.

#### Pavements

The main thoroughfares in Stafford Conservation Area have been resurfaced with concrete block paving and most of the roads operate a time dependent pedestrianisation scheme. In order to maximise access for all pedestrians and wheelchair users the level of the road, including the pavements, has been united. This has meant that the traditional relationship of building to raised pavement to road is not present, and the definition of the former kerb line has not always been reproduced.

There is a haphazard and inconsistent use of herringbone and other patterning in the block paving in Greengate Street, Gaolgate Street, Martin Street, Bridge Street, Crabbery Street, Stafford Street and Eastgate Street which do not relate to former historical road or paving surfaces. The wide expanse of red paving, particularly in the broader streets, creates a visual “flooding” effect with the buildings appearing to be floating.

Most of the outlying streets such as Mill Street have not received such an overhaul and retain square concrete pavements, raised pavement and concrete kerbing. Church Lane has had a more sympathetic traditional refurbishment. Although the main roadway is covered in concrete blockwork (herringbone), the traditional kerbside location is marked by four sets of square stone setts that are sunk slightly to form a gutter and curve with the bending road. The pavement is constructed of granite setts that sit very well with the timber framed buildings that line it.



Church Lane

The Victoria Park area generally features tarmac footpaths although buff coloured gravel has been used in recent waterside paving schemes in imitation of former Edwardian gravelled paths.

### **Street lighting**

The centre of Stafford has undergone a streetlight replacement programme and a sympathetic design has been adopted using a style taken from the historic wall mounted lamp on no.4 Market Square. They feature orb shaped lamps and black painted cast iron wall fixings or lamp standards. The roads that feature these traditional style lamps are Gaolgate Street, Market Square, Greengate Street and Martin Street, and similarly styled lamps are fixed to the parapet of the Victoria Road Bridge over the River Sow by Victoria Park.



Street lamps on no.4 Market Square and Victoria Road bridge

Other traditional lantern style street lights, on shorter standards are in place in Church Lane and suit the narrower width of the lane and the smaller scale of the buildings. Other lantern style lamps are also fixed to the buildings at first floor level, and large wall mounted lamps are positioned close to the parapet level on some shops in Greengate and Gaolgate Streets. These modern fittings have no historic merit.

A programme of routine street lighting replacement has recently been completed within Stafford town centre, generally replacing late 20<sup>th</sup> century lampposts with their more modern galvanised steel counterparts. 'Enhanced' lampposts with heritage style lanterns have been used in the recent Bridge Street works, which appear out of proportion on the modern 8m posts.

The result is an incoherence of street lighting design across the town centre; a result of the piecemeal nature town centre enhancement projects.

### **CCTV**

Closed circuit television is installed at various points around the town and with varying levels of impact on the streetscene. In some cases, such as in Martin Street and Gaolgate/ Greengate Streets, small white units are fixed to the walls of buildings and are relatively discreet. In other parts of the town there are more intrusive examples such as at the junction of Tenterbanks and Water Street where a tall freestanding post carries three cameras which sit prominently. On the corner of Church Lane and St Mary's Place a large orb shaped CCTV unit is fixed to the corner of the building at first floor height and is intrusive within the conservation area.

### **Pedestrian movement and footpaths**

A network of footpaths supplements the main routes through the town and many radiate from Gaolgate and Greengate Streets in the form of narrow roads or yards.

There are other footpaths in St Mary's Gardens and the riverside walk to the west of town. The riverside pathway provides a pleasant route from the railway station car parks and superstores on the outskirts of town to the west, past Broadeye Windmill and through Victoria Park with various points at which the pedestrian can cut across into the town centre.

Most of these footpaths have modern tarmac surfacing, although there is bound gravel along the riverside.

### **Traffic and parking**

The main shopping streets are mostly free of traffic due to the restrictions in place. Heavy cast iron bollards painted black, and featuring the Stafford Knot emblem block, restrict some of the entrances into the main shopping area and delineate central vehicle accesses through Gaolgate, Greengate and Bridge Streets. The absence of cars, both parked and in motion, helps maintain the traditional character of High Street.

However, the current scheme to circulate traffic around the town passes through the Conservation Area, particularly around Victoria Park. The weight of traffic at peak times means that parts of the Conservation Area become very congested. The south-west of the Conservation Area has some of the limited amount of car parking, notably on Tenterbanks. Most of the town's parking space is located outside of the Conservation Area and double yellow lines prevent kerbside parking on routes such as Earl Street. Some opportunistic parking takes place on some of the small open areas, such as on the corner of Water Street and Mill Street which creates visual clutter to the detriment of the character of the Conservation Area.

### **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 to reinforce the status and location of this county town as well as tie the image of the public realm together. The emblem has continued to be used for the following elements:

- Cast iron bollards;
- Signposts;
- Waste bins;
- Paving at the entrance to Martin Street from Market Square.



Stafford knot emblem on street furniture

## 8 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

### 8.1 Building types

The historic buildings in the Conservation Area are typical of a town with a variety of uses, resulting in a range of architectural styles, building form, details and materials. Many of the buildings to be found in the Conservation Area today are historic, and most stand on the sites of much earlier buildings, thus maintaining the historic building lines that may have been periodically destroyed by fire, flood or replaced in the continuing interests of modernisation.

Stafford has retained a long history of buildings lining its historic routes since the early medieval period. Many of the existing historic buildings originated as houses, although commercial and industrial uses have gradually been introduced through alteration and development. Today they form tightly packed rows of tall buildings, mostly with shopfronts to the ground floor.

Classes of buildings in the Conservation Area include:

- Religious – St Mary’s Church; St Chad’s Church; Church Lane Evangelical Church; Baptist Church, The Green;
- Local government/Institutional:
  - Historic: Shire Hall; Borough Hall (Library and Gatehouse Theatre); Chambers (former County Education Offices); Stafford College; William Salt Library; Martin Street County buildings; Eastgate Street County buildings; Chetwynd Centre. The majority of these civic and educational buildings date from the late-19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup>, though the Shire Hall is a late-18<sup>th</sup> century building and other Georgian buildings have been re-used for civic purposes;
  - Modern: Tipping Street county buildings; Civic Centre, Riverside; Crown Court;
- Leisure: Borough Hall (Gatehouse Theatre), Ancient High House Museum;
- Commercial – a range of scales of buildings from two to three and occasionally four storey buildings, including the Ancient High House, core of historic commercial buildings around the Shire Hall in Market Square including the old bank building (Lloyds TSB), some early purpose built department and chain stores, such as the 1930s Burtons (now the Orange Shop on Gaolgate) and former department store, soon converted to the present HSBC and WHSmiths;
- Public houses – The Bear; The Swan Hotel; Hogshead (former civic building); The Tavern; The Picture House (formerly a cinema); The Grapes; The Forester; The Vine Hotel; Old Rose and Crown; Joxer Brady’s; Nag’s Head; Bird in Hand; Shrewsbury Arms. Again these range in date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century Bear through Georgian and Victorian establishments to the converted cinema of 1913;
- Residential – Sir Martin Noel’s Almshouses date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and are still in domestic use; semi detached late 19<sup>th</sup>/ early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses on Tenterbanks and Friars’ Road; other houses from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries dotted around: Nos. 15 and 16 Victoria Road, No. 133 Tenterbanks, Nos. 27 & 29 Eastgate Street.

### 8.2 Building form

The historic buildings of Stafford are generally grouped as continuous linear development on either side of the road and are occasionally broken by lanes, such as Tipping Street, Martin Street and Crabbery Street. Also, some alleyways lead away

from the main streets, notably next to the High House leading into St Mary's Place. Scattered between the historic buildings of Stafford are post-war buildings that retain this densely packed appearance.



Bridge Street



Greengate Street

The building line is maintained throughout although the principal feature of Victoria Park is its sparsity of buildings. This results in two areas of distinctive built form:

The principal features of the built form are:

- Urban market town character;
- Cohesive qualities with two or three storey terraced buildings, dating to the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many of which are listed buildings;
- Buildings mainly arranged in terraces, with a common building line on the back of the pavement;
- Mainly a domestic scale of building on narrow plots;
- Roofs have similar ridge and eaves heights, but there is variety. Roofs are mainly gable ended but with some hipped and flat roofs;
- Brick axial stacks and end stacks, simply detailed, but largely hidden from view in the High Street;
- Simple rectangular footprints and elevations, with a mixture of modern and historic shopfronts, mainly flat fronted but some with bay or bow fronts;
- Mainly double hung timber sash windows, some retaining their original glazing pattern and divided into small panes;
- Outbuildings at the rear of buildings, constructed at right angles to the main residence.
- Some modern infill is out of character in terms of mass, detail and materials. It has a more horizontal built form, contrasting with the height and slender width of the majority of historical buildings.

### 8.3 Listed buildings

There are over 80 listed buildings or structures in the Stafford Conservation Area. 10 of these are listed grade II\* and the rest are listed grade II.

They have a variety of uses including shops, houses, public houses, two medieval parish churches, an hotel, and a number of civic buildings. The Conservation Area includes most of the listed buildings in Stafford town centre, mainly concentrated in the

commercial core and civic centre. The revised boundary adds further listed buildings including Broadeye Windmill and the Chetwynd Centre.



Broadeye Windmill



Chetwynd Centre

Most of the large listed civic buildings in the Conservation Area were designed by Borough and County architects which gives these groups of buildings a distinctive style. Others have been built in a more vernacular style and often modified later. The different characters relate to the settlement's different roles as both a traditional market town and as an historic county town. The different groups of buildings can largely be found in the separate character areas identified in Chapter 9.

#### 8.4 Positive buildings

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 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.

Government guidance in PPS5 '*Planning for 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 (Policy HE9). The guidance note states that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings.

#### 8.5 Building Materials

The historic buildings of Stafford, including those outside the Conservation Areas, have been built using mainly local materials, particularly red brick. Some key buildings, such as the churches, have used other materials such as sandstone. The most common roofing material is Staffordshire blue or red plain clay tiles, although slate was used for

grander commercial and civic buildings. Many buildings have had their roofs replaced with concrete tiles. In Victoria Park there are two 1930s pavilions which are thatched.

Some buildings retain vernacular building methods such as timber framing, such as the Ancient High House with its elaborate external timberwork and some of the buildings in Church Lane including some jettied timber framed buildings. Many of the early timber framed buildings along the main shopping streets and elsewhere in the town were faced with brick in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of these still remain and contain some surviving timber frame structure.

A continuing theme throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century was the use of brick with stone dressings. This continued through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, notably in the County buildings.



Former council building with stone dressings

### 8.6 Historic shopfronts and other commercial premises

Stafford has some important surviving historic shop fronts, of which the following are the most complete or the most interesting:

- First and second floors of No.17 (Orange) and Nos. 25 to 35 Crabbery Street;
- Nos. 1 to 10 Church Lane;
- No. 10 (Jackson's County Fruit Stores) & No. 35 (The Curtain Works) Mill Street
- Express & Star, The Chronicle Bridge Street;
- No.9 Eastgate Street;
- No.24 Greengate Street;
- No.7 Market Square (George Bate Gunmakers).



Crabbery Street



Market Square



No.9 Eastgate Street

Historic shopfronts retain traditional features such as moulded fascias, pilasters, stall risers, glazing bars and original entrances. Replacement shop frontages often do not utilise these historic features, instead opting for extensive use of plate glass and other modern materials such as steel and plastic. Such replacements invariably result in the loss of historic character due to the changes in the physical relationship of the shopfront to the rest of the building and the introduction of unsuitable modern materials that do not complement the traditional streetscape of an historic market town. Shop fronts that are not attached to listed buildings are more at risk from alteration than those included on the statutory list.

Also notable in Stafford are many historic frontages to public houses:

- Joxer Brady's, Martin Street;
- Bird in Hand, Earl Street;
- Nags Head, Mill Street;
- Shrewsbury Arms, Eastgate Street;
- The Sheridan/ The Forrester, Salter Street;
- The Vine Hotel, Salter Street;
- The Swan, Greengate Street.

These frontages vary greatly in style, but have in common escaping major alteration to introduce shop fronts on the ground floor level. Complete and coherent frontages survive, providing good examples from the former historic streetscape and its more domestic character. In addition to the greater solidity of ground level elevations, and domestic scale of window openings, the inns tend to have rendered and painted elevations, timber, small-paned fenestration with thick window surrounds, as well as prominent hand painted signage on timber boards.

## 9 CHARACTER AREAS

### 9.1 Summary of Character Areas

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

Character Area 1: Commercial Core

Character Area 2: Civic Centre and Commercial East

Character Area 3: Civic Riverside and Commercial West

Character Area 4: Victoria Park

### 9.2 Character Area 1: Commercial Core

This character area is focused on Greengate and Gaolgate Street, which run straight and wide through the centre of the town. They are the main axis of the town with the market place standing between them and they link the former sites of the northern and southern gates of the medieval town.



Market Square

The general character is urban with vast areas of red herringbone block paving covering the wide space between buildings and, therefore, filling much of the vistas down the route. The area is pedestrianised for most of the daytime and has a relaxed shopping atmosphere, often enlivened by influxes of students from the nearby college and university.

This modern character contrasts with the traditional character of the commercial core, which is mainly recognisable in the historic buildings across the town. The long rows of tall commercial buildings, many historic, run along the street, punctuated by the open Market Square and various side streets.

The historic buildings in this character area are scattered throughout, from the fine 18<sup>th</sup> century red brick Chetwynd House at the south end of Greengate to the late 16<sup>th</sup>

century Ancient High House at the north. Further north are the late 18<sup>th</sup> century historic civic buildings including the Shire Hall in Market Square. Gaolgate Street has a row of 18<sup>th</sup> century listed shops, formerly houses, which have some surviving timber structural features that show their earlier origins. In between these buildings there are many other historic structures over a variety of scales, from some early department stores such as the former Burton's to a Victorian post box. However, many of the commercial premises have been adapted over the years. Along with completely new buildings that have been introduced on some sites, this has had a significant affect on the appearance of the area. While in most cases the historic scale of buildings and the building line has been maintained, new materials, modern shop fronts and signage have generally had a negative effect on the character of Stafford's commercial core.



Gaolgate Street



Greengate Street

Bridge Street continues southwards from the site of the Green Gate, beyond the historic boundary of the walls. It has a similar urban shopping character but is currently still open to motor traffic. The streetscene is filled with independent shops, public houses and restaurants. The west side of the street has a continuity of appearance, with a mainly continuous building line along the pavement edge featuring late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century red brick houses, later converted to shops arranged over two and three storeys. The grade II listed Picture House adds some variety to the street scene, being more lavishly detailed and set back and detached from the parades on either side. Around the river bridge, the continuous frontages become more fragmented and the shops, although of a similar scale to the rest of the buildings in the street, feature late Victorian and Edwardian style applied half timbering and prominent gable ends. The east side of the street has a much less cohesive appearance and less historic character. Modern buildings with non-traditional finishes stand either side of a service road, and their scale and signage upstages the few remaining 19<sup>th</sup> century shops on this side of Bridge Street.

#### **The principal features are:**

##### Key positives:

- Historic county and market town centre with an interesting variety of historic buildings, ranging from the grand timber framed Tudor Ancient High House to a Victorian post box;
- High concentration of listed buildings in the town centre and many other high quality historic buildings of local interest;
- Well preserved medieval street plan;
- The Market Square provides an attractive focal point;
- Vibrant commercial and civic environment with good facilities;

- Some well maintained traditional style and historic shopfronts;
- Consolidated, traditional-style of some parts of the public realm, e.g. bollards and street lighting;
- Motor traffic has only limited access to the commercial centre.

Key negatives:

- Poor design and modern materials of many shopfronts and shop signs;
- Some unsympathetic rebuilding (Chicago Rock Café) and conversion of historic buildings;
- Some poorly maintained buildings;
- Uncoordinated/ poor quality of the public realm in some parts;
- Modern paving not relating to historic traditions and having a visually bland effect on the streetscene;
- Poor repairs to paved surfaces, especially around Market Square;
- Poorly sited highway signage creating visual clutter;
- Poorly coordinated street furniture creating visual clutter;
- Few cafes or restaurants by Market Square creating an under use of the area in the evenings;
- Busy traffic along the peripheral ring road and on some of the roads within the Conservation Area.



Bridge Street

### 9.3 Character area 2: Civic Centre and Commercial East

Towards the east of the commercial core is the main civic centre. This features many more grandly scaled buildings, mainly red brick late 19<sup>th</sup> century structures which are the offices for various local government departments. They extend through Martin Street into Eastgate Street where there are some earlier buildings as well as other modern insertions/ infill such as the police station.

Eastgate Street snakes back round to the south-east and leads out of town with a two storey parade of shops that are smaller in scale than those in the commercial core. To the north, Eastgate Street becomes Salter Street which also has smaller independent shops in its winding street. These include a continuous row of two and three storey 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings leading up to the junction with Malt Mill Lane, although a new building stands on the corner. Beyond the junction is a variety of architecture, with the

impressive red brick former department store on the corner to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Vine Hotel and two storey shops lining the corner as Salter Street snakes back towards Gaolgate Street. The western side of the street also has some imposing architecture such as the 19<sup>th</sup> century red brick bank building opposite The Vine Hotel and the rear of the Borough Hall of 1876. Also, the three storey 1960s shops on the corner of Market Street are visually dominant. These are some of the back lanes of the Conservation Area, running almost parallel to the North Walls marking the limits of the medieval town.



Martin Street



Salter Street

The larger civic buildings (in width and mass) in the centre of this character area (Borough Hall and Council Offices) coincide with the road narrowing, which combines to create impressive towering buildings.

Also notable in Eastgate Street are the mature trees that line it and soften the urban streetscape. However, further north there are few tree specimens.

#### **The principal features are:**

##### Key positives:

- Interesting historic buildings, many listed and many associated with Stafford's civic role as an administrative centre, such as Borough Hall and William Salt Library;
- Well preserved medieval street plan;
- Characterful winding back lane lined by two and three storey historic buildings to create a traditional urban townscape;
- Vibrant civic and commercial environment with good facilities such as libraries, theatre and official services;
- Pleasant "café culture" appearance to the northern part of Salter Street;
- Some well maintained traditional shopfronts and frontages to public houses;
- Consolidated, traditional style public realm;
- Mature tree specimens towards the south of the character area.

##### Key negatives:

- Poor quality of the design, materials and scale of some modern buildings, particularly the block of flats to the south of the police station and Britannia House;

- Poor quality of many modern shopfronts, particularly the use of unsympathetic materials and the insertion of plate glass with no historic division through the use of stall risers, transoms and mullions;
- Unsympathetic shop signage, often plastic and garish: e.g. Fit 4 Life, no.1 Salter Street;
- Some shops have closed and businesses, creating an appearance of neglect;
- Poorly sited highway signage creating visual clutter;
- High speed of traffic turning into Eastgate Street from Tipping Street;
- Pedestrian congestion around bus stop at the bottom of Market Street;
- Poor maintenance of some of the buildings, e.g no.41a Eastgate Street.

#### 9.4 Character area 3: Civic Riverside and Commercial West

On the western side of the commercial core is an area of mixed use but dominated by large civic and educational buildings, that are spread over a large area with substantial gaps between them and a large open space next to the primary focal building, the Parish Church of St Mary.

The large mature trees in St Mary's churchyard give a leafy appearance to the character area, which is complemented by the picture postcard view down the curving length of Church Lane with its contrast of smaller scale historic buildings.



St Mary's Churchyard



Church Lane

Church Lane provides a characterful small lane that circumvents the commercial core. Mill Street connects with it, but contains many replacement buildings in detail at odds with the character of the Conservation Area, but on the historic buildings' line and with a respectful scale. Water Street heads south to the park and the river where Tenterbanks follows the course of the old town walls and contains some of the few residential properties in the Conservation Area. Further north on Water Street, the Sir Martin Noel's Almshouses are an impressive set of stone buildings set back from the road behind gardens. Their small scale contrasts with the large modern block of flats on the opposite corner and the even larger court building that faces the grade II listed War Memorial next to Earl Street.

Beyond the War Memorial is the Hogshead Public House, a former local government school which is built of red brick with stone dressings. Behind it, Stafford College has a mixture of modern and historic buildings, including the expansive listed Tenterbanks building that uses the same materials in the clean lines of 1930s moderne style and runs along Victoria Road and looks over the park to the riverside.

**The principal features are:**

Key positives:

- Good quality and interesting historic civic, commercial and residential buildings, ranging from the Church of St Mary to no.35 Mill Street to Sir Martin Noel's Almshouses;
- Well preserved medieval street plan;
- St Mary's Church and churchyard provide an attractive focal point;
- High concentration of listed buildings around the parish church and Victoria Square, including the grade II\* Church of St Mary and the grade II War Memorial;
- Steady level of activity around the County Court and Stafford College buildings
- More relaxed atmosphere and leisure use around St Mary's churchyard and Church Lane;
- Vibrant commercial environment to the south;
- Well preserved historic character of Church Lane shops and businesses;
- Well maintained traditional shopfronts and pub and restaurant frontages, notably on Church Lane;
- Good pedestrian routes through the character area created by the limited access of cars and the routing of traffic through the neighbouring ring road.

Key negatives:

- The loss of historic railings around St Mary's churchyard. The detrimental effect of the loss of historic fabric is partly mitigated by the spacious feel and ease of access it gives to the open space;
- Poor accessibility between the area and the park and river;
- Some unsympathetic infill development, particularly the Guildhall Shopping Centre which backs onto St Mary's churchyard and some of the more modern college buildings on Earl Street, as well as Mill Court, Earl Street.
- Garish overlarge shop signage and modern shopfronts, notably in Mill Street;
- Some parking on grass verges, e.g. the corner of Mill Street and Water Street;
- Inconsistent style and quality of paving across the character area.

**9.5 Character area 4: Victoria Park**

This area is characterised by the wide open spaces that stretch along the riverside to the west of the town. The park was created in 1908 to allow Staffordians to enjoy the riverside location.

As well as a useful amenity, it is an important visual part of the Conservation Area, providing a large open green space that acts as a buffer between the tightly developed town centre and the train station, busy ring road and intensive development of terraced houses beyond.

The area is full of mature trees as well a scattering of small buildings including two pavilions, footbridges, an aviary and a bandstand. The pavilions are single storey thatch-roofed structures from the interwar period that stand detached on the edge of playing areas in the park. They make a positive impression on the landscape, helping to visually divide each area and providing some storage space and shelter. It is possible to walk around the perimeter of the circular aviary, which is a modern metal structure with netting. The substantial structure stands in a slight depression and is visible from Tenterbanks which runs on a higher level, and from the traditional style bandstand across the river on the other side of the park. There is also a paddling pool, a bowling green and well stocked planted areas.

The long, green open space provides extensive vistas along the river and across to the train station, as well as east to the St Mary's Church spire. The banks of the river and footpaths have recently been upgraded in a generally sympathetic manner, with bound gravel footpaths.

**The principal features are:**

Key positives:

- Large, well maintained public open space in Victoria Park with an attractive riverside setting;
- Views of interesting historic buildings including Stafford College and Broadeye Windmill;
- Relaxed environment with good leisure facilities;
- Consolidated, traditional style public realm;
- Good quality restoration and upgrading of the riverside and park area including new footpaths and traditional style features such as parapet lamps on the Victoria Bridge;
- Groups of mature trees;
- Good transport links in and out of the town, including the close proximity of the railway station.

Key negatives:

- Traffic congestion on Victoria Road;
- Open space around the site of the former town mill requires maintenance;
- Poor state of repair of historic ironwork to boundaries.
- Some buildings in a poor state of repair: e.g. Lewis Heath Memorial Institute;
- Some poorly designed or unsympathetic development, e.g Victoria Park House.



Victoria Road Bridge and River Sow

## **10 ISSUES**

### **10.1 Definition of Issues**

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 public consultation exercise, including a public meeting and four week period of consultation. 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:

- Need for review of the Conservation Area boundary;
- Protecting historic fabric – Develop a list of Locally Listed buildings;
- Buildings at Risk;
- Enforcement;
- Alterations to buildings;
- New development;
- Highways and traffic management;
- Education and information;
- Uses/ vitality;
- Archaeological potential;
- Enhancement potential;
- Tree management.

#### **Suggestions for future action:**

- Implement the boundary changes and name change 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 links between the town centre and the leisure centre and other amenities on the outskirts of town;
- Improve the Tipping Street area with a high standard of design, respectful of the historic character of Stafford, in any forthcoming redevelopment;
- Tackle traffic issues caused by ring road, particularly traffic flow around the train station;
- Ensure that future repairs to paving/ extensions of pedestrianised areas make more use of traditional materials and mark the traditional division between roadway and pavement;
- Repair Town Centre buildings with grants – possible Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) grant scheme;
- Encourage cafes and restaurants to use the wide pavements and foster more use of the town centre in the evenings.

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- 3.9      Highways/ Traffic/ Pedestrians
- 3.10     Grants – assessment of existing and potential for new schemes
- 3.11     Buildings at Risk/ Urgent Works Notices
- 3.12     Archaeology
- 3.13     Article 4 Directions

**4.      Monitoring**

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Format and Derivation**

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

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 Stafford Conservation Area.

### **1.2 Purpose & Legislative Context**

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

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.

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 was a driver for best practice in conservation area management and stated: '*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.

### **1.3 Local Plan & emerging LDF**

Current planning policies for Stafford, including those governing development and management of change in conservation areas, is laid out in the *Stafford Borough Local Plan*, adopted in 1998.

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.

#### **1.4 Sustainability**

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.

#### **1.5 Consultation**

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.*'

#### **1.6 Monitoring**

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.

## 2. Generic Actions

### 2.1 Policy

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.

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.

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.

### 2.2 Conservation and Design Guidance

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.*

### 2.3 Development Control Process

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Design and development briefs should be promoted and encouraged as a matter of course on any substantial application in the conservation areas. 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.*

### 2.4 Enforcement Strategy

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.*

## 2.5 Street Management

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.

In Stafford Town there is a lack of continuity in the design and fabric of the public realm. While there is a presumption in favour of traditional materials in conservation areas, it is recognised that it is not always practical or financially viable to use traditional materials in large-scale projects. 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 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.

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.*

## 2.6 Promotion & Awareness

While it is often the conservation section that deals first hand with planning applications and other schemes in conservation areas, almost every department in the Council will deal with matters affecting them in some way. It is the responsibility of every employee to give regard to the special character 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).*

## 2.7 Historic Environment Champions/ Parish Councils

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.

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.*

## **2.8 Education/community involvement**

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.*

## **2.9 Production of further guidance/leaflets**

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.*

## **2.10 Statutory and local list**

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 (ie a "local list"), and appropriate policies for their retention and improvement.*

## **2.11 Buildings At Risk**

There are six entries on the English Heritage Buildings At Risk Register in Stafford Borough. *Stafford Borough Council also maintains its own list of Buildings at Risk.*

*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 serve repairs and urgent works notices where appropriate.*

### 3. Specific Actions – Stafford Conservation Area

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

#### 3.1 Conservation Area boundary review & Change of Name

After the completion of a thorough survey of the Stafford Conservation Area, a character appraisal was written. This concluded that a number of boundary revisions would improve the extent to which the designation accurately reflects the special character of Stafford. Revisions to the initial proposals were subsequently requested by Senior Borough Council Officers.

##### **Additions:**

- The rear of selected properties in Eastgate Street and the southern side of North Walls;
- The northern end of Gaolgate Street;
- The northern section of Victoria Park and the River Sow to include Broadeye Windmill and associated buildings;
- Friars' Road, Friars' Walk, Bailey Street, Lichfield Road and the Chetwynd Centre (proposed fifth character area of The Green).

All these areas retain some special architectural or historic character considered to be worthy of the protection of conservation area status.

##### **Deletions:**

- Bridge Street: Chicago Rock Café and neighbouring building;
- Eastgate Street: Police Station and tower block;
- Chapel Street: St John's Market;
- Earl Street: later 20<sup>th</sup> century extension of Stafford College building;
- Victoria Road: Lewis Heath Memorial Institute, Victoria Park House.
- The former Tipping Street car park, now the site of the new 'Staffordshire Place' County Council Offices.
- The rear of selected properties in Eastgate Street and the southern side of North Walls;

The recommendation to remove these sites from the Conservation Area is based on conclusions of a survey, which can be found in section 10 of the character appraisal. Some of these sites are noted as negative features in their particular character area, while others do not have any specific architectural or historic special interest. Other negative sites, as shown on the Townscape Appraisal map in the character appraisal document, are not recommended for exclusion from the Conservation Area. This is either due to their location well within the boundary or their role within the setting of the Conservation Area.

##### **Name Change:**

It is also proposed that the name of this conservation area be changed from "Stafford" to "Stafford Town" to distinguish the designation from other conservation areas in Stafford.

All these changes and new designations are shown on the Townscape Appraisal map, which is included in the Character Appraisal document.

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

*ACTION: To designate the new conservation area under the name "Stafford Town Conservation Area".*

*ACTION: To continue reviewing the Borough's conservation areas within the wider Stafford area to ensure that each area is included within the most suitable conservation area boundary.*

### **3.2 Site and building enhancements**

While there are a good number of positive buildings in Stafford, both listed and unlisted, this is offset by some inappropriate new development, including back land development, has been introduced into the Stafford Conservation Area. Late 20<sup>th</sup> century developments in and behind Gaolgate Street, Greengate Street, Eastgate Street, Mill Street and Water Street, Tenterbanks, Victoria Road are not built to a design that is sympathetic with the historic character of Stafford (marked as negative buildings on the Townscape Appraisal map).

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

### **3.3 Shopfronts**

The Stafford Conservation Area contains a number of shops, many with historic shop fronts (see Section 6.6 of the Character Appraisal). 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. The better quality shopping parades in Crabbery Street should serve as exemplars.

Occasionally, a simple modern shop front may be more appropriate than a reproduction 19<sup>th</sup> 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.*

*ACTION: The Council will prepare further guidance regarding the appropriate design of shop fronts and new development in the Stafford Town Conservation Area.*

### **3.4 Advertisement control**

All outdoor advertisements affect the appearance of the building or neighbourhood where they are displayed. The visual appearance of the Stafford Conservation Area suffers from 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.*

### **3.5 Amenity Space**

Stafford benefits from a variety of areas of public open space across the Conservation Area (see section 6.2 of the appraisal). 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 Market Square) should inform any enhancement schemes.

*ACTION: The Council will seek to maintain and improve its open areas and pathways. It will also to work with other agencies to maintain and improve other areas, such as the riverside footpath.*

### **3.6 Traffic signs, street lights and the public realm**

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 it would be ideal if a traditional height and style lamp were introduced across the area.

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.

*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.*

### **3.7 Quality of pavement surface**

Paving and surface materials throughout the area are generally modern due to the recent programme of replacement undertaken by the Borough Council. However, some parts of the Conservation Area have not yet received the upgrading. With the exception of Church Lane, the street works to date have failed to enhance or reinforce the historic identity of the Conservation Area.

*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 Stafford Town Conservation Area.*

### **3.8 Trees and landscape**

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 planning permission.

Within the Stafford Conservation Area, important trees and green spaces are indicated on the Appraisal Map; it is expected that any development would respect their roles within the Conservation Area, and ensure that they would continue to preserve and enhance the special character of the Conservation Area.

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

### **3.9 Highways/Traffic/Pedestrians**

The Council has no direct control over highways, which is under the remit of Staffordshire County Council. However, the ring road, which runs around and through the Conservation Area, has an impact on the character of Stafford, particularly at times of busy traffic during the day (especially on market days). While little can be done in the short term to remove the large volume of traffic that passes through Stafford, and adversely affects its character, any future public works to the carriageway should take full account of potential effect they will have. Pavement and crossings must be kept maintained and improved in order to facilitate its use by pedestrians.

Other highways in the Conservation Area are much narrower and have retained more historic character. These characteristics have resulted in a more controlled traffic flow. The introduction of further traffic control measures might include the pedestrianisation of other roads such as Water Street, Earl Street and Mill Street.

*ACTION: The Council will seek to work in partnership with the County Council over new schemes which will improve the control of traffic flow and pedestrian access across the different streets of Stafford. It will seek to ensure that new and existing hard surfaces and road signage will preserve the special character of Stafford Conservation Area.*

### **3.10 Grants – assessment of existing and potential for new schemes**

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 Stafford.

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

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

None of the six Buildings at Risk on the English Heritage Register in Stafford Borough are within the Conservation Area. However, Broadeye Windmill and No.10 Bridge Street are identified as being 'at risk' in the Stafford Borough Council BAR register and 8 others are considered 'vulnerable'.

*ACTION: The Council will continue to work in partnership with the Friends of Broadeye Windmill to secure its appropriate repair, to monitor the condition of the listed buildings in the Conservation Area, encourage appropriate maintenance of historic buildings, and where necessary use its powers to serve urgent works or repairs notices.*

### **3.12 Archaeology**

Stafford town centre has a rich history from Roman and Saxon times through 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 16th 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."*

### **3.13 Article 4 Directions**

The Council is able, through the imposition of an Article 4 Direction, to make restrictions on the permitted development rights of owners of unlisted single-family dwelling houses in the Conservation Area. Article 4 Directions are generally designated in order to protect particular building details such as windows, doors and chimneystacks in the interests of preserving the special character of a conservation area. An Article 4 Direction is therefore useful in strengthening controls over the unsympathetic alteration of unlisted buildings, which would cumulatively have an adverse affect on the character of the Conservation Area. It is worth noting that strict controls already exist over listed

buildings and unlisted buildings in a variety of other uses (such as flats or shops) where Listed Building Consent or Planning Permission is already required for a variety of minor alterations.

The evidence of the character appraisal does not make a good case for the designation of an Article 4 Direction in Stafford, because there are few single family dwelling houses. Most buildings in Stafford Town are in commercial, leisure or office use. Permitted development rights do not apply in these instances and full planning controls already exist. There would therefore be scant justification for making any Article 4 Direction within the Stafford Town Conservation Area.

*ACTION: None.*

#### **4. Monitoring**

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.

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

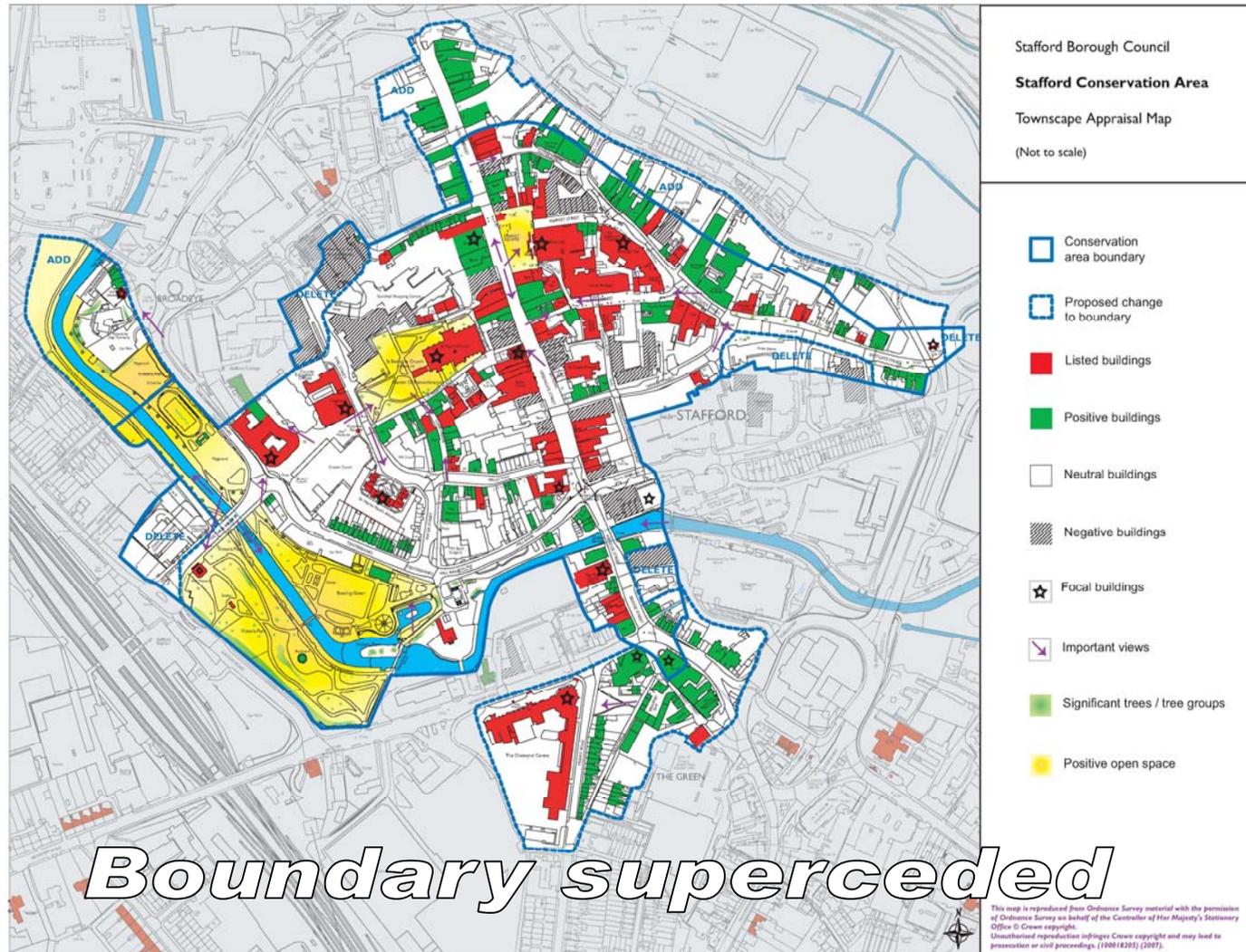
This will monitor the changes that have occurred through the continuous processes of development and through individual changes of use. The purpose is to re-evaluate the special character of a CA to reach decisions about whether the area still warrants designation, and to check that the boundaries are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

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.



# Stafford Conservation Area

## ❖ Appendix 1 Townscape Appraisal Map

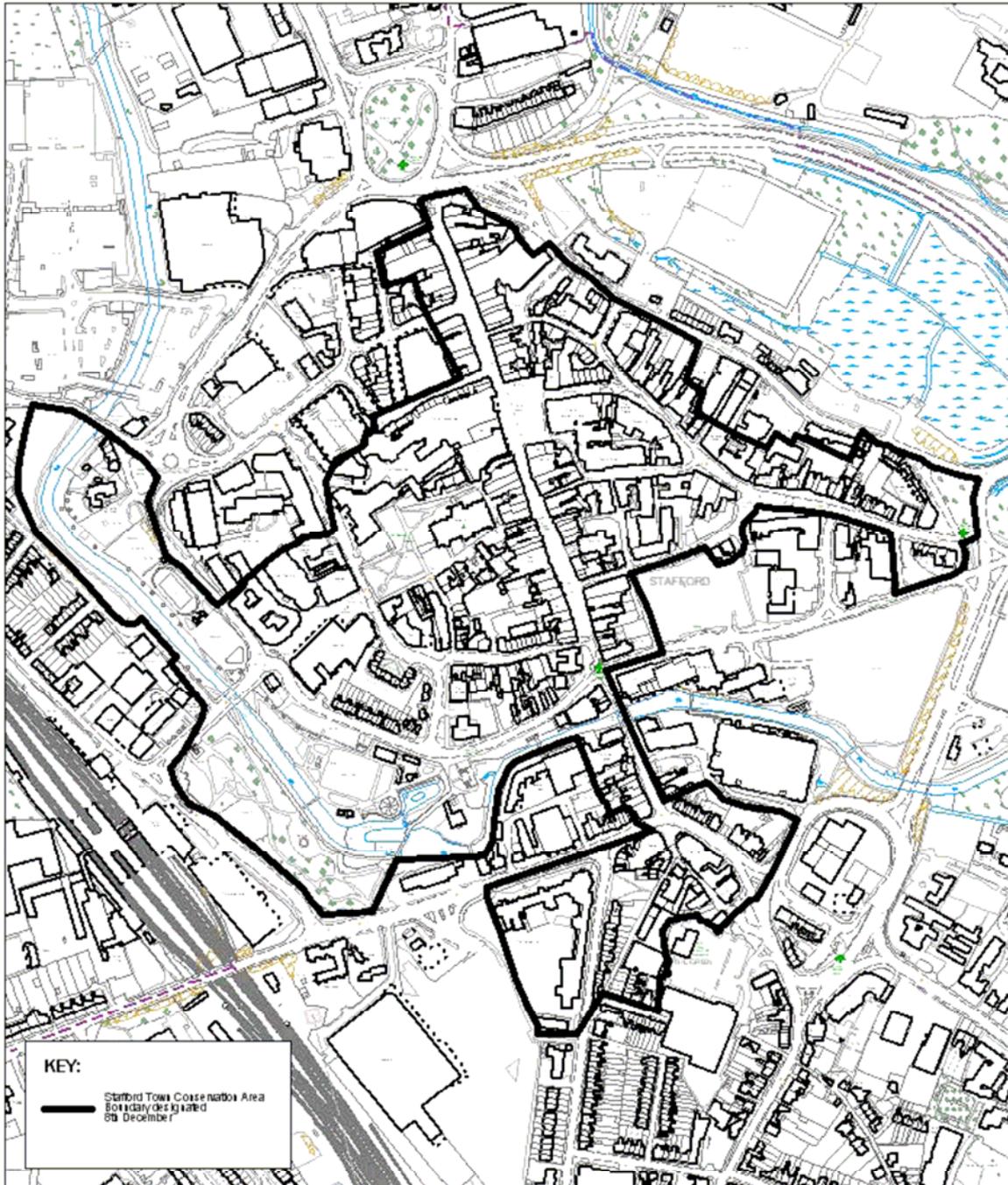




# Stafford Conservation Area

 <p><b>Stafford</b> BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	Stafford Borough Council Civic Centre Riverside Stafford ST163AQ	Scale 1:5000 at A4	
	Tel: (01785) 619000 Fax: (01785) 619219 SMS: 07791 471029	© Crown copyright and database right (2011) Ordnance Survey (100016239)	

## Revised Stafford Town Conservation Area Boundary Designated 8th December 2011



## Stafford Conservation Area

### ❖ **Appendix 2      Bibliography**

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