

Planning and Historic Towns in Staffordshire: A guide to the Staffordshire Extensive Urban Survey



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1. Introduction

The Staffordshire Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) forms part of a national programme of EUS projects initiated and supported by English Heritage. EUS projects aim to document the archaeological potential, historical development and current historic character of the smaller historic towns of England, on a county-by-county basis. The projects are intended to support the proper application of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in historic towns.

The Staffordshire EUS selected twenty-three towns of medieval origin spread across Staffordshire's eight local planning authority areas were selected for inclusion within the study (cf. map 1). Not all of those places would now be considered urban, as some medieval towns did not prosper and became just villages. An assessment of what constitutes a 'town' in the medieval period, and the criteria and methodology for identifying Staffordshire's medieval urban centres can be found in the EUS Final Report (Section 2) (www.staffordshire.gov.uk/extensive-urban-survey).

The EUS considers the historic and archaeological character of both the historic cores and the modern suburbs. The project considers the quality of the broad historic character, but as a principally desk-based exercise it does not provide details of the quality of particular buildings or streets. Such detail may be required as part of specific development proposals or enhancement projects and would thus represent a deepening of the detail contained within the EUS project. For guidance more detailed studies cf. 4.3.



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Map 1:
23 EUS Towns and
Staffordshire's eight Local
Planning Authorities

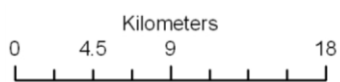


Legend

• EUS Towns

Local Planning Authorities

- Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough
- Cannock Chase District
- East Staffordshire Borough
- Lichfield District
- South Staffordshire District
- Stafford Borough
- Staffordshire Moorlands District
- Tamworth Borough



1.1 Staffordshire's medieval towns in the 21st century

Not all of Staffordshire's medieval towns can be considered to be major settlements in the modern landscape. Staffordshire's local planning authorities (LPAs) are required to produce Local Plans as identified under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). As part of their commitment to produce a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (NPPF para.159) the Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have generally used settlement hierarchies to identify suitability for sustainable growth. This has entailed an assessment of access to commerce and services for the community of a place and its surrounding area.

The settlement hierarchies produced by the local planning authorities generally reflect their differing circumstances and attitudes to 'urban' settlement and the concept of 'the town' in the 21st century. In general they all identified three or four categories which can be roughly identified as Major Strategic Centres, Main Service Centres, Local Service Centres and other rural settlements; the first three being of most relevance to this study. The twenty-three EUS towns roughly fall into the following modern categories:

Main Service Centres	Intermediate Service Centres	Local Service Centre
Burton-upon-Trent	Alrewas	Abbot's Bromley
Cannock	Alton	Betley
Cheadle	Brewood	
Leek	Eccleshall	
Lichfield	Kinver	
Newcastle-under-Lyme	Penkridge	
Rugeley	Tutbury	
Stafford		
Stone		
Tamworth		
Uttoxeter		

Fig. 2: Settlement hierarchy based on service centre functions in early 21st century

The remaining three (Church Eaton, Colton and Newborough) fall into the 'other rural settlement' category. Overall, this analysis of the role of these settlements within their hinterlands in the early 21st century suggests that the majority of Staffordshire's medieval towns still operate as service centres to greater or lesser degrees. The EUS forms an invaluable resource for those areas, which have been identified for their capacity to enable proportionate sustainable growth. The EUS identifies heritage potential and informs the need for appropriate development and design in areas of high heritage sensitivity.

2. EUS Outputs (HER and Town Assessment Reports)

The results of the characterisation process for each town are held in the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and consist of both text and mapped information (the latter held in Geographic Information System (GIS) form (www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Historic-Environment-Record)). The key output for each town is an 'assessment report', subdivided into two parts detailing the town's historical development (Part One) and an assessment of its historic character, archaeological potential and significance (Part Two).

2.1 Town Reports – Historic Background

Part One, entitled 'Background and Setting', addresses the understanding of the development of the town through an analysis of a variety of sources (cf. Final Report Section 1). This section provides an overall historic context for the development of each town sub-divided by period and is drawn from available documentary history (including where available the Victoria County Histories (VCH)) and past archaeological investigations.

2.2 Town Reports - Characterisation

Part Two, entitled 'Characterisation and Assessment', begins with an analysis of the historic character of each town using aerial photography, historic and modern maps and with reference to the history of the town as laid out in Part One. The townscape was divided up into different individual elements which were categorised into Historic Character Types (HCTs), for example 'Education Facility' or 'Suburb', along with a period of origin (of when that HCT first appeared in that part of the town). A list of the HCTs used within the EUS can be found in Appendix 1 of the Final EUS Report. Once the HCTs had been assigned the towns were sub-divided into a number of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs). These

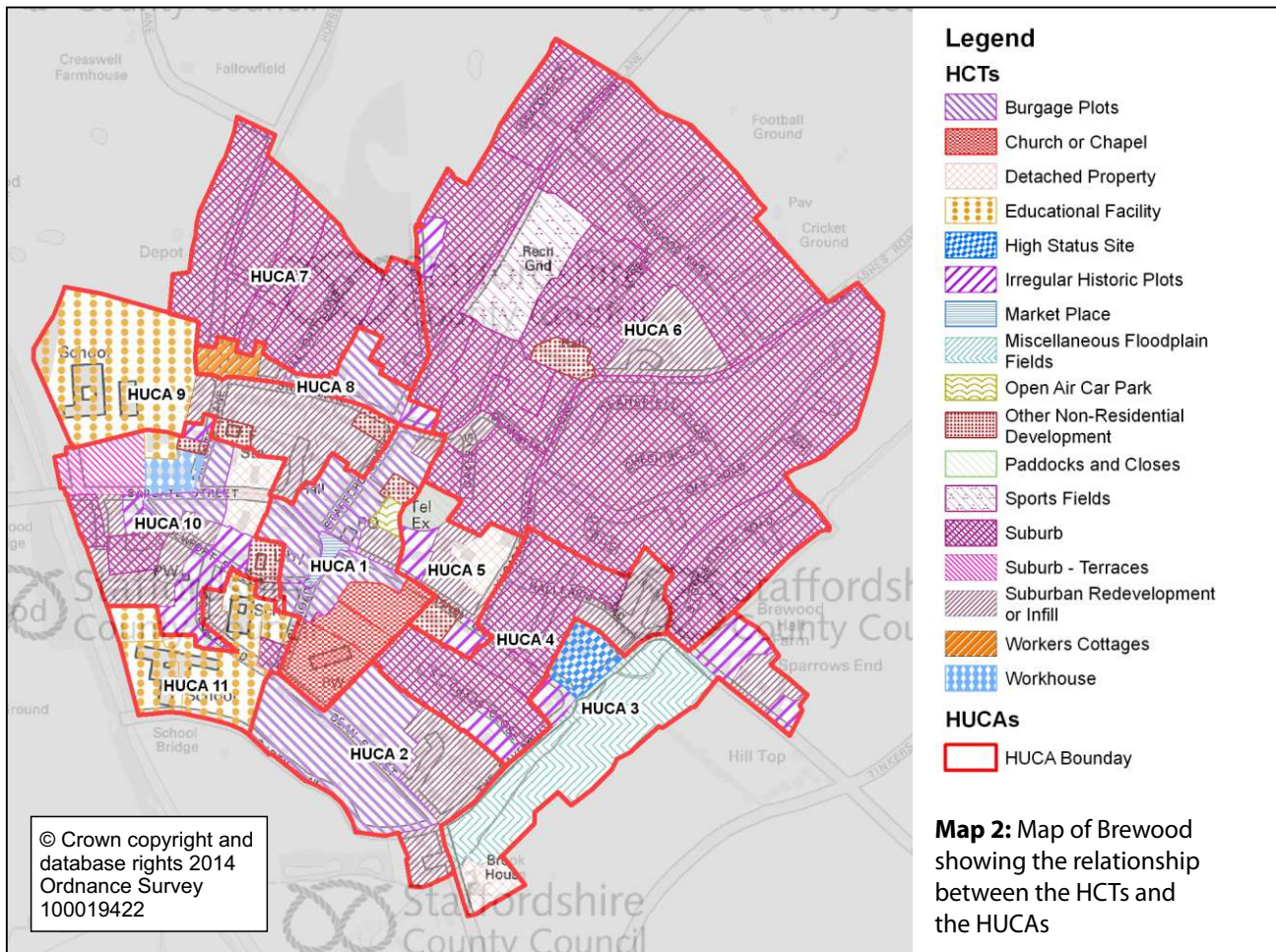
were defined by their current historic character as expressed by the HCTs (cf. map 2; for methodology cf. Appendix 2 of the Final Report).

For each HUCA a Statement of Significance was produced which discusses its historic character, as well as a more detailed consideration of its history and archaeological potential.

2.3 Assessment - Heritage Value

The assessment of heritage value within the town reports was based upon English Heritage's guidance document 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' (2008)¹. The document recommends looking at the significance of different aspects of heritage assets: the Evidential Value, the Historical Value, the Aesthetic Value and the Communal Value (cf. Appendix 2). Within the Staffordshire EUS the recommendations made by the guidance document were interpreted to fit the project and consequently each town report also provides a methodology for understanding how the values were assessed (cf. Appendix 2 of the Final EUS report). The values are expressed as 'High', 'Medium' and 'Low' alongside supporting text as justification.

¹ English Heritage 2008 viewed on the HELM website 26/03/2013 <http://www.helm.org.uk/guidance-library/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/>



2.4 Assessment - Recommendations

The final aspect of this section was a list of recommendations for each HUCA based upon the Statement of Significance and Heritage Values. The recommendations are largely generic and are written to assist planners and developers by referencing them to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

They do not obviate the need for detailed advice from historic environment specialists particularly where larger and/or particularly complex sites in sensitive areas are concerned.

3. EUS in Planning

3.1 Planning Services

The historic environment makes an important contribution to the quality of our environment; to sustainable economic regeneration; to health and social well-being; and in contributing to communities' sense of identity². This is recognised within the planning system where the historic environment is a material consideration.

In the Government's 'National Planning Policy Framework' (NPPF) issued in 2012, the historic environment is largely considered under Section 12. NPPF also highlights the importance of taking account of the differing character within settlements and landscapes areas in its 'Core planning principles'. The importance of local and historic character is specifically referenced under Paragraphs 58, 126 and 170.

The EUS contributes to the planning process by providing a sound evidence base for the identification of the historic character, archaeological potential and the significance of the historic environment within Staffordshire's historic towns.

3.2 Planning policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides guidance to local planning authorities on the production of Local Plans (Paragraphs 58 and 126 see above)³. It recommends that strategic policies should be produced to guide the delivery of the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment (NPPF para. 156 and para. 157). The evidence for such strategies should be based upon "adequate, up-to-date and relevant" information (para. 158 and para. 169). Furthermore para. 169 states that such information should be used to "assess the significance of heritage assets and the

contribution they make to their environment".

The EUS reports provide the relevant information on the history, development and character of each town within Staffordshire in order to make informed decisions regarding strategic plans and when considering individual applications. An assessment of the significance of the historic environment and its contribution to the townscape is embedded into the EUS through the division of each town into 'Historic Environment Character Areas (HUCA)' (cf. map 2). In line with NPPF para. 169 the EUS also assesses the likelihood of encountering currently unidentified heritage assets (particularly archaeological deposits) within the 'Heritage Values' section of each HUCA. The EUS also informs the development of appropriate research strategies for developments and as such should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of the West Midlands Regional Research Framework (cf. Section 4 of the EUS Final Report).

In line with the NPPF, Staffordshire's eight District and Borough Councils have or are in the process of producing Local Plans to guide and inform sustainable development. All of the local plans include a policy which aims to protect and enhance the historic environment. The evidence base upon which the local plan and their relevant policies are made include the Extensive Urban Surveys amongst other evidence; this is made explicit in the majority of Staffordshire's Local Plans. Even where this is not made explicit the EUS documents should be considered as part of the "relevant information" as identified in NPPF (cf. above).

² HM Government 2010 web viewed 12/09/2013 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/229834/Acc_HeritageVision_Part1.pdf; English Heritage 2010 web viewed 12/09/2013 <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/understanding-place-intro/understanding-place-intro.pdf>; English Heritage et al 2013 web viewed 12/09/2013 <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/heritage-works/>

³ Communities and Local Government. 2012. National Planning Policy Framework. Communities web: http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/211593_9.pdf

3.3 Development Management/control

In order to fulfil our commitments to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment as laid down in both NPPF and in the Local Planning Authorities' Local Plans, it is important that there is early engagement between applicants, planners and heritage professionals (reflected in NPPF para. 188). For each Historic Urban Character Area (HUCA) within Section Two of the individual town reports, the report provides a statement of significance and assesses the heritage values (cf. 2.1) which encompasses the archaeological potential and the legibility of the historic character in particular⁴. Recommendations (tied into NPPF policies) provide over-arching guidance which will be pertinent to informing sustainable development/change. In this respect the EUS provides a starting point for fulfilling paras. 128 and 129 of NPPF where the emphasis is placed upon both the LPA and applicants to identify and assess the significance of any heritage assets which may be affected by proposals. It also enables those seeking to submit planning applications to identify types of heritage assets which may be affected.

The recommendations for each HUCA also identify where proposals should take account of the surrounding local character to inform good design and appropriate change.

3.4 Conservation Area Appraisals and Local Lists

The EUS can also be used to inform Conservation Area Appraisals to highlight sites and areas of historic interest as well as providing an assessment of heritage value. It can also be used to identify potential new Conservation Areas or the reconfiguration of

existing Conservation Areas. Cannock Chase District Council has already begun to use the EUS as one of the initial sources in the preparation of Conservation Area Appraisals.

The EUS has, where appropriate, highlighted areas where currently undesignated historic buildings survive which make a positive contribution to the historic character of the townscape. This information can be used as a starting point to inform the preparation of Local Lists, and for the consideration (under NPPF) of undesignated heritage assets (and their settings) which may be affected by development proposals.



4. Using EUS

The EUS can be used to inform a number of documents to support either the Local Plan or individual planning applications.

4.1 Local community planning (Neighbourhood Plans)

The Localism Act (2011) enables local communities to influence the future of the places where they live by providing them with the right to produce 'Neighbourhood Plans'⁵. Para. 58 of NPPF states that both Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans should be based upon 'an understanding and evaluation of the defining characteristics' of a place⁶. English Heritage has produced guidance for communities producing 'Parish Plans' or 'Village Design Statements' which also applies to Neighbourhood Plans. The document 'Knowing your place' (2011) emphasises the importance of understanding the historic character and heritage assets of each settlement⁷. This information will assist in the production of plans which combine the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment with the hopes for the future and to inform sensitive development that responds to its surroundings⁸.

The EUS may also provide baseline evidence for planning authorities and those involved in formulating neighbourhood plans to understand the contribution of the historic environment to the local character of Staffordshire's medieval towns and their hinterlands. As an essentially desk-based survey the EUS can also provide a starting point for any further detailed characterisation work and targeted fieldwork which may be required. A list of sources is provided below to help those interested in formulating a

Neighbourhood Plan to consider the historic environment within its policies as well as guidance for further understanding the character of local areas.

Where an EUS has not been produced for a settlement the methodology used in the EUS project may serve as a guide to similar assessments in order to understand the historic character and archaeological potential.

4.2 Heritage Statements

Heritage Statements will be required to support any planning application, in line with paragraph 158 of NPPF where development is deemed to impact upon the historic character of the townscape (particularly within the historic cores as well as within and beyond Conservation Areas). Where such a development lies within the bounds of one of Staffordshire's medieval towns the EUS should be referenced and the Heritage Statement assessed against the definition of the historic character and heritage values for the relevant HUCA. The Heritage Statement should take account of the potential for development to impact upon the local townscape as well as individual heritage assets. This should also address how the design of any new development will enhance the surrounding historic character. The EUS also provides an indication of the archaeological potential within a HUCA; the Heritage Statement should further assess this potential in terms of the location and nature of the development (in terms of the method and extent of groundworks).

Heritage Statements may also be required within HUCAs lying beyond the historic cores and conservation areas, in cases where proposals have been deemed to affect specific heritage assets.

⁵ Department for Communities & Local Government 2011 viewed 12/09/2013 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/localism-act-2011-overview>

⁶ Ibid: 15 (para. 58)

⁷ English Heritage 2011 web viewed 12/09/2013 <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/knowning-your-place/knowning-your-place12.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.

It should also be noted that where a heritage statement is required NPPF paragraph 128 states that as a minimum the local historic environment record should have been consulted (cf. Section 5: Contacts).

4.3 Detailed heritage assessments/Archaeological Desk Based Assessments

There may be a requirement for a more detailed assessment of the historic environment where large-scale redevelopment is proposed or in order to inform the regeneration of a townscape. It should be borne in mind that in these circumstances, whilst the EUS provides a useful starting point, it does not record the quality of the historic character. Further Heritage Area Assessments may, therefore, be required which would form a 'deepening' of the EUS assessment. Guidance on detailed characterisation has been produced by English Heritage in a series of documents entitled 'Understanding Place', which identifies three scales of characterisation work⁹. A broad standard and guidance for '*Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment* (2012) has also been prepared by the Institute for Archaeologists. While focusing on the methodological aspects of the desk study, it does provide a valuable insight into the process and the range of data available.



5. Useful contacts and links

Staffordshire County Council:

Environmental Specialists
Rural County
Staffordshire County Council

Office Location: No. 1 Staffordshire Place,
Stafford, ST16 2LP

Postal Address: Wedgwood Building, Block A,
Tipping Street, Stafford, ST16 2DH

Tel: 01785 277290/7285/7280
Email: her@staffordshire.gov.uk

English Heritage:

English Heritage West Midlands Region,
The Axis,
10 Holliday Street,
Birmingham,
B1 1TG

Tel: 0121 625 6820
Email: westmidlands@english-heritage.org.uk

Staffordshire County Council relevant links:

Staffordshire Historic Environment Record:
www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Historic-Environment-Record

Staffordshire Extensive Urban Survey reports:
www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Extensive-Urban-Survey

English Heritage. 2010. 'Knowing your place':
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/landscapes-and-areas/historic-areas-assessments/>

Oxford City Council, with the support of English Heritage, has produced a 'Character Assessment Toolkit' to enable local communities to assess the local character of both landscape and the built environment. This work provides a useful framework for making detailed and rapid assessments of local character which can be applied by anyone involved in local community planning. Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit web:
<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/CharacterAppraisalToolkit.htm>

Institute for Archaeologists. 2012. Standard and Guidance for historic environment desk based assessment. IFA web
<http://www.archaeologists.net/codes/ifa>

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