

Appendix 2: Historic Environment Character Area Overviews for Eccleshall

This appendix provides an overview of the historic environment for each of the Historic Environment Character Areas (HECAs) that fall within the Eccleshall project.

It should be noted that the information and any recommendations contained within this appendix is subject to amendment should any new information become available.

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Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 5a

Introduction

This document forms an overview of the HECA which specifically addresses the potential of medium to large scale development to impact upon the historic environment.

The historic landscape character is dominated by field systems which had their origins as open fields in the medieval period and which were enclosed piecemeal throughout the post medieval period. The piecemeal enclosure survives in some areas, particularly associated with a few of the medieval villages and hamlets. However, across much of the character area these field systems have seen considerable field boundary removal during the 20th century. However, some surviving boundaries may fossilise an earlier historic landscape within their form. The historic settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farmsteads survives with little 20th century development.

The character area covers 5,403ha and the majority lies within Stafford Borough, with approximately 950ha to the north lying within Newcastle Borough.

Archaeological and historic documentation

Very little archaeological or historic research has been carried out within the character area other than one watching brief and one photographic survey. All known information is recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by Staffordshire County Council.

Historic Environment Assets Summary

The current understanding of the later prehistoric landscape of the country suggests that it had mostly been heavily wooded until the Bronze Age. Some clearance may have begun to take place by this period to support a small scale pastoral economy when humans were settling down to farm specific landscapes. There is some evidence for human activity during the prehistoric period within the character area. This includes a possible prehistoric sub-rectangular enclosure identified, along with later features, during a watching brief¹. A late Mesolithic/early Neolithic flint core was also found, although there was not positive evidence that it was associated with the enclosure. A Neolithic macehead was also found to the west of Swynnerton². Such finds probably represent casual loss and do not add to our understanding of what activities were being carried out in the Neolithic and Bronze Age within the character area.

¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 05070; Core: The piece of stone or flint remaining after flakes have been produced. This is a by-product of tool manufacture. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

² Staffordshire HER: PRN 01656; Mace: A stone or metal head on a wooden shaft (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

A mound surviving as an earthwork to the north of Chatcull has been described as being a possible barrow. However, other interpretations have also suggested a medieval motte or a windmill mound³.

In the wider area there is some evidence for human activity lying just to the east of the character area, within Swynnerton Park (see HECA 5f). Evidence includes a Scheduled Bronze Age barrow lying in Swynnerton Park⁴ along with a further two possible barrows noted in the 1940⁵. Two possible Bronze Age barrows lie on the Maer Hills just to the north of the character area (see HECA 26e)⁶. Generally considered to be the remains of funeral monuments, such features when they were constructed would have been designed to have been seen across the landscape and in this context they may also have functioned as territorial boundary markers. Their presence adjacent to the character area adds weight to the hypothesis that this landscape was open during the Bronze Age.

Also on the Maer Hills, just to the north of the HECA, lies Berth Hill Camp, a Scheduled multivallate hillfort which overlooks the character area⁷. There are a further two hillforts, both lying approximately 3km beyond the HECA, one to the west, Bishop's Wood promontory fort⁸, and the other to the east, Bury Bank hillfort⁹. These monuments are usually associated with the Iron Age, some are known to have earlier origins. The presence of the hillfort suggests a centralised power base was present within the area from at least the late Bronze Age/Iron Age, which oversaw a dispersed settlement pattern across the landscape supporting the theory of woodland clearance from this period. The hillfort would have provided a cultural, economic and administrative focus for the surrounding communities.

A Roman site comprising substantial quantities of pottery, charcoal, building rubble, a possible pit and a trench were found to the far south west of the HECA¹⁰. It has been suggested that the trench was dug to carry water from a spring in the field. The evidence suggests that settlement existed in the vicinity. To date this is the only evidence for Roman activity within the character area.

Evidence for human activity in the Saxon period almost exclusively comes from references to entries in Domesday Book (1086). Twelve places are recorded which lie within the HECA, although four of them, Chapel Chorlton,

³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00475; Motte: An artificial steep-sided earthen mound on, or in, which is set the principal tower of a castle. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00501; English Heritage SM No. 22425

⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 01837

⁶ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00479 and PRN 00477 (also Scheduled English Heritage SM no. 22433). A further two mounds are recorded nearby, which were originally identified as barrows but this has since been questioned: PRNs 00482 and 00480

⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00023; English Heritage SM no. 21569. Multivallate hillfort: A hillfort enclosure with defences composed of more than one bank and ditch. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

⁸ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00633. Within HECA 12a

⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00022; English Heritage SM no. 21566 (see HECA 26a)

¹⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 01658

Dorslow, Slindon and Brocton, are described as waste and given no population, although this does not prove that there was no settlement present at this period¹¹. The church at Chapel Chorlton, for instance, is said to have 12th century origins¹² and, although it was almost entirely rebuilt in the 19th century, earlier masonry survives in the tower. There was certainly a chapel here by the mid 16th century.

All of the settlements were held by either the Bishop of Chester or Robert, the baron of Stafford. Sugnall and Standon appear to have been the higher ranking places by the early Norman period, with nine and fourteen heads of household recorded¹³. A priest is recorded for the latter suggesting the presence of a church during the Saxon period. All Saints' Church is of 12th century origin¹⁴, but could have been re-built upon the site of an earlier building. A watermill was also recorded in the Standon entry and it is possible that this had stood on the site of the extant Standon Mill, to the east of the parish church¹⁵.

The settlements are scattered across the HECA and remain as small villages and hamlets exhibiting a dispersed character. Ankerton is described as being a deserted medieval village. It was first recorded in the mid to late 13th century, possibly suggesting that this was an area of later colonisation. The placename survives as a farmstead, with cottages at Little Ankerton approximately 700m to the south east. Ankerton farmstead is likely to date from the late 19th century, although it is possible that this would have represented a rebuilding of an earlier site. It is possible that any settlement at Ankerton in the medieval period amounted to no more than one or a cluster of farmsteads.

Other later settlement includes Whittington, which is first recorded in the 14th century and Bowers which is first recorded in the 13th century. Charnes Old Hall moat, a Scheduled Monument, lies 600m to the north west of the village¹⁶. It is possible that it was the site of a manor house in the medieval period, perhaps representing a deliberate attempt by the local lord to enhance their status by relocating their residence away from the main settlement area.

The earliest known domestic structure is Green Farm which originated as a medieval open hall house, with a cruck frame¹⁷, which stands in the village of Chapel Chorlton. This has been tentatively dated to the 15th century, but cruck framed buildings in Staffordshire appear to have a date range between the 14th to 17th centuries¹⁸.

There are a further 101 surviving historic farmsteads scattered across the character area. Over half of these farmsteads are of the regular courtyard

¹¹ Staffordshire HER: PRNs 02412, 02438, 03891 and 03892

¹² Staffordshire HER: PRN 06956

¹³ Staffordshire HER: PRNs 02574 and 02569, 03899

¹⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07760

¹⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00503

¹⁶ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00642; English Heritage SM no. 21506

¹⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN03658

¹⁸ Shryane 1983: 7

plan, which nationally mostly date from the late 18th century¹⁹. The regular courtyard plan is the most common form in Staffordshire and is spread widely across the landscape. These forms appear to represent a deliberate development aimed at improving agricultural productivity being taken forward by wealthy landowners at this period. Some of these farmsteads within the character area are likely to represent the re-building of agricultural buildings rather than signifying a new farmstead in the landscape during the late 18th/19th century. Six of these plan types are to be found associated with 17th century Listed Buildings including Baden Hall and Bryanna farmhouse²⁰. Both of these properties were re-fashioned during the early 19th century, perhaps offering a possible date for the construction of the regular plan form farmstead, although in both cases there have been subsequent 20th century changes. The latter farmstead also contains a range of Grade II Listed early 19th century outbuildings²¹.

The other major farmstead plan form within the character area (representing 24% of the total) is the loose courtyard plan, which is not as easily dated as some examples across England have shown medieval origins; however the majority appear to be post medieval period to 19th century in date. The plan form does, however, suggest incremental development over a number of years if not centuries. Green Farm, see above, is represented as loose courtyard plan form associated with a farmhouse of 17th century origin.

By the late medieval period much of the character area formed open fields²², which were probably farmed by the inhabitants of these scattered settlements. This pattern of arable agriculture, where two or more large fields were divided into individual strips whereby the local people held scattered strips among them, was probably in place by the late Saxon period. The watermill recorded at Standon in Domesday Book supports the importance of arable agriculture in this landscape.

The open fields were often enclosed, within Staffordshire, from the late medieval period onwards by a means of piecemeal enclosure. This process was carried out through a means of informal, verbal agreements between farmers who wished to consolidate their holdings into a block rather than being scattered across two or more fields. Most of the historic farmsteads are associated with this type of enclosure and the fact that seven of them are known to have 17th century origins may suggest that much of this landscape was in the process of being enclosed at a similar period.

The piecemeal enclosure survives with little field boundary loss in association with several of the historic settlements; around Croxton, Whittington and Weston Hall as well as to the north of Chapel Chorlton and to the north and east of Walford. Across much of the rest of the character area the piecemeal enclosure has been re-organised particularly during 20th century, as a result of

¹⁹ Lake 2009: 19

²⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07646 and PRN 07647

²¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07648

²² Open Field: An area of arable land with common rights after harvest or while fallow. Usually without internal divisions (hedges, walls or fences). (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

field boundary removal. However, these field systems may retain some legibility of their origins as medieval open fields and later resulting piecemeal enclosure within the surviving field boundaries.

Standon Hall also stands within a well surviving historic landscape of early irregular enclosure. The origins of this field pattern are more obscure although they may represent the early enclosure of heath land or woodland. However, ridge and furrow²³ earthworks were identified on aerial photographs in a small area to the west of Standon village, suggesting that this area at least had formed part of an open field in the medieval period.

A Grade II Registered historic parkland survives around Maer Hall to the north of the character area. Maer Hall itself dates from the 17th century, but was considerably altered and extended in the mid to late 19th century, although in the 1960s it was reduced to its 17th century extent²⁴. A parkland had been laid out during the 18th century, but was extensively altered by the landscape gardener John Webb during the early 19th century²⁵. The estate had been bought by Josiah Wedgwood II (the son of the master potter) who was the uncle of Charles Darwin. Darwin visited Maer Hall many times and married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood at St Peter's Church lying to the east of the hall in 1839²⁶.

A further three parklands were to be found within the HECA, two of which are not longer legible within the HECA.

Watermeadows were established along the Meece Brook probably in the 18th/19th century. The development of water meadows during this period meant that the landowners could control the flooding of the land and ensure an early crop of grass and subsequent multiple crops for fodder. This enabled them to over-winter larger numbers of animals. Only the basic elements of the watermeadows survive, which probably include the head and main drains.

Other than the 20th century changes to the field pattern across the HECA the settlements remain small and have seen little expansion. Swynnerton military training ground dominates part of the eastern boundary of the HECA, to the north east of Cold Meece. Industrial sites are also present as part of the development.

Designated Historic Environment Assets

There is one Scheduled Monument, Charnes Old Hall moated site lying within the HECA. Berth Hill Camp hillfort is another Scheduled Monument, which lies adjacent to the north of the character area. The Grade II Registered Park and Garden at Maer Hall also lies within the character area to the north. Part

²³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 20384; Ridge & furrow: A series of long, raised ridges separated by ditches used to prepare the ground for arable cultivation. This was a technique, characteristic of the medieval period. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

²⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 06976

²⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 40273; English Heritage Parks & Gardens Register no. GD2256

²⁶ Ibid; Waite 2007:36

of two Conservation Areas fall within the character area, Maer (031) to the north and Swynnerton (013) to the east. There are also 47 Listed Buildings.

Historic Environment Considerations

The historic dispersed settlement pattern survives, including sites such as the Scheduled moated site, within a field pattern which has been largely impacted by field boundary removal during the 20th century. Several historic farmsteads survive which contain early origins as well as numerous other Listed Buildings.

The presence of the Scheduled Beth Hill Camp, an Iron Age hillfort, lying adjacent to the north of the character area as well as other Prehistoric and Roman monuments in the wider landscape suggests that there is the potential for below ground archaeological deposits to survive. There is also archaeological potential within the historic cores and associated with known areas of early settlement.

Consequently any future development with the character area would need to consider the following issues:

- Potential impact upon the surviving dispersed settlement pattern.
- The impacts upon the farmsteads, particularly those with surviving historic buildings.
- Potential impact upon those aspects of the historic character of the landscape which is still legible within the character area and how this could be retained or reflected in any development; particularly where it is strongly associated with the historic built environment and historic settlements.
- How development may impact upon the designated sites and their settings.
- It would need to assess the impacts upon above and below ground archaeology.

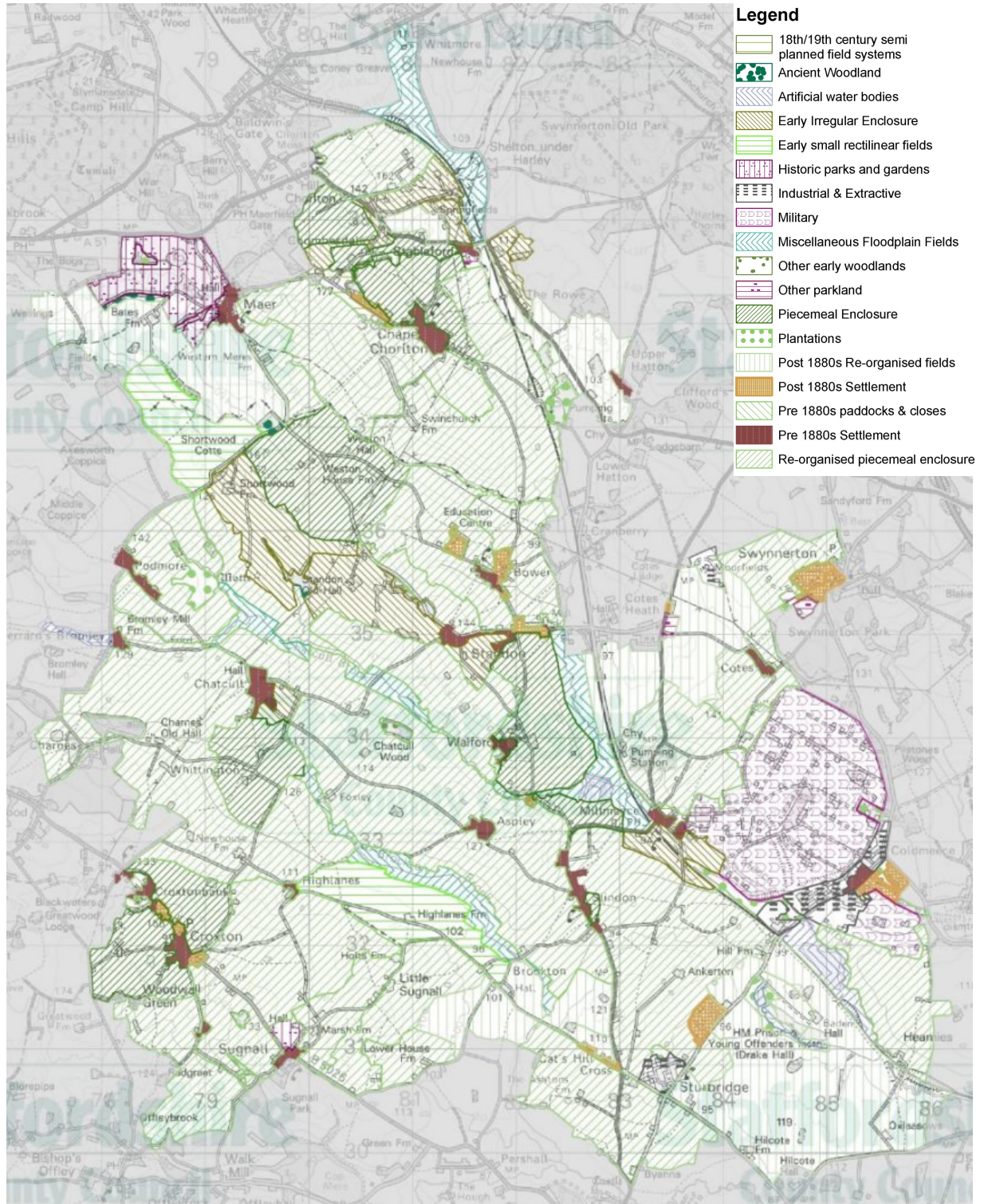
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Map 1: Refined HLC

Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 5f

Introduction

This document forms an overview of the HECA which specifically addresses the potential of medium to large scale development upon the historic environment.

The historic landscape character of the HECA is generally well preserved with historic field patterns of late medieval/post medieval origin as well as the deliberately planned fields of 18th/19th century date. The historic settlement pattern also survives well with villages and farmsteads scattered throughout the landscape. A few of the villages have seen expansion during the 20th century, most notably Yarnfield. Eccleshall remains the largest settlement, having been established as a town in the medieval period. A detailed historic character assessment of Eccleshall is being carried out as part of the Staffordshire Extensive Urban Survey (EUS).

The character area covers 4,801ha and falls wholly within Stafford Borough.

Archaeological and historic documentation

Various archaeological works have been carried out across the character area, which include field walking, building surveys and watching briefs. The results of these archaeological works and other archaeological information are recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by Staffordshire County Council.

Historic Environment Assets Summary

The current understanding of the later prehistoric landscape of England suggests that it had mostly been heavily wooded until the Bronze Age. Some clearance may have begun to take place by this period to support a small scale pastoral economy when humans were settling down to farm specific landscapes. There is some evidence for human activity during the Neolithic and Bronze Age within the character area, in particular the Scheduled Bronze Age barrow lying in Swynnerton Park²⁷. A further two possible barrows were also noted within the park during the 1940s, although it is not known to what extent these survive²⁸. Towards the western side of the character area at Pirehill the remains of a possible Bronze Age ring ditch²⁹ and a linear feature were identified on aerial photographs. Such features when they were constructed were often designed to have been seen across the landscape and in this context they may also have functioned as territorial boundary markers. Their presence within the character area adds weight to the hypothesis that this landscape was open during the Bronze Age. An undated

²⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00501; English Heritage SM No. 22425

²⁸ Staffordshire HER: PRN 01837

²⁹ Ring Ditch: Circular or near circular ditches, usually seen as cropmarks. Use the term where the function is unknown. Ring ditches may be the remains of ploughed out round barrows, round houses, or of modern features such as searchlight emplacements. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

enclosure, possibly of prehistoric date, was identified on aerial photographs between Chebsey and Norton Bridge³⁰.

Further evidence for Neolithic/Bronze Age activity has been found near Cold Norton farm where a collection of six stone tools³¹ were found. Such a collection may suggest more intensive human activity in the vicinity rather than representing casual loss. Further prehistoric artefacts have been found across the character area, although these probably represent casual loss rather than firm evidence of intensive human activity.

There is little evidence for activity dating to the Iron Age and Roman periods although a pit alignment³² has been identified on aerial photographs to the east of the character area. These monuments have been dated to the Iron Age/Roman period and are considered to represent property boundaries. Archaeological work in the area around Chebsey recorded four rubbish pits of dating to the Roman period³³. To the south of Aston-by-Stone a rectilinear enclosure seen on aerial photographs has been interpreted as a possible Roman temporary camp³⁴.

There is little tangible evidence for activity during the Saxon period, although a number of artefacts were recovered from Swynnerton Park which included 6th to 11th century finds along with others of Roman and Medieval date³⁵. On the whole evidence for human activity in the Saxon period almost exclusively comes from references to entries in Domesday Book (1086). Seven surviving settlements were recorded including the later market town of Eccleshall. This settlement and Chebsey appear to have been the most significant settlements by 1086 with 16 and 29 heads of household being recorded in each entry respectively. Their importance in the landscape by the late Saxon period is perhaps supported by the fact that these are the only entries within the character area recorded as having a priest, suggesting the presence of a church. A Scheduled late Saxon cross still stands in the churchyard at Chebsey³⁶. Eccleshall has been suggested as the site of an important Saxon church, perhaps supported by the fact that the parish is the second largest in the county. From the Saxon period and into the medieval period the manor was held by the Bishops of Lichfield and the church contains the tombs of four bishops³⁷.

³⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 03684

³¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 0069; PRN 02101; PRN 02102; PRN 02103; PRN 02104

³² Pit alignment: A single line, or pair of roughly parallel lines, of pits set at intervals along a common axis or series of axes. The pits are not thought to have held posts. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

³³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 05067 and PRN 05068

³⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04606; Temporary camp: A temporary overnight camp enclosed by a shallow ditch and palisade, constructed by Roman troops on campaigns or manoeuvres. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

³⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04102

³⁶ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00097

³⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07253

The listed buildings within the character area are mostly concentrated within the settlements. Eccleshall was established as a town in 1199³⁸ and there are fifty listed buildings within the historic core. The earliest of these is the Grade I Holy Trinity Church which has 13th century origins³⁹. The earliest vernacular buildings have been dated from the 16th century onwards. To the north of the town the medieval remains of the Scheduled Eccleshall Castle, a palace owned by the Bishops of Lichfield, survive although the current house is of 17th century date⁴⁰. A number of 16th and 17th century timber framed houses survive in the other historic settlements although the earliest known is a late 15th/early 16th century property in Yarnfield which originated as an open hall house⁴¹. During the 20th century Eccleshall and Yarnfield have seen the greatest expansion of housing, whilst on the eastern edge part of the suburbs of Stone, at Walton-by-Stone, extend into the character area.

Scattered across the landscape, both separate from and located within settlements, are 74 historic farmsteads 14 of which contain at least one Listed Building. Over half of these farms display a regular courtyard plan form, which nationally are seen to date from the late 18th century⁴². The regular courtyard plan is the most common form in Staffordshire and is spread widely across the landscape. These forms appear to represent a deliberate development aimed at improving agricultural productivity being taken forward by wealthy landowners at this period. Three of these farmsteads within the HECA are associated with Listed 17th century farmhouses, but at Barnend in Pershall retains a 17th century barn within its plan⁴³. This evidence suggests that some of these regular courtyard plans represent the rebuilding of earlier farmsteads and not just the establishment of new farms within the landscape during the late 18th and 19th centuries. The other farmstead plan forms within the character area are not as easily dated as some examples across England have shown medieval origins; however the majority appear to be post medieval period to 19th century in date. The dispersed plans and the loose courtyard plans suggest incremental development over a number of years if not centuries. Sixteen farmsteads in the character area have been identified as being of a loose courtyard plan, with 10 being of a dispersed plan and 5 linear plans. Quaker Farm, to the north of Shallowford, has a loose courtyard plan and contains a Listed timber framed farmhouse whose origins pre-date the 17th century⁴⁴. Five further loose courtyard farms associated with Listed buildings of 17th to 19th century date perhaps re-affirming the hypothesis of incremental development.

All of the settlements recorded in Domesday Book had between six and ten plough lands suggesting arable cultivation was being carried out to a considerable degree, only Enson was not a productive area, being described as waste in the entry. Eccleshall had two mills; further evidence of the importance of an arable agriculture in the character area by the late Saxon

³⁸ Staffordshire HER: PRN 02348

³⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07253

⁴⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00213; English Heritage SM no. 21525

⁴¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 09951; Open hall house: A house consisting of a single storey hall with two storey domestic ranges attached to either one or both ends.

⁴² Lake 2009: 19

⁴³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 14057, PRN 08107, PRN 07246 and PRN 07332

⁴⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07242

period. Medieval arable open fields⁴⁵ covered much of the character area and have been identified as being associated with all of the Domesday places as well as a further three settlements which were first recorded in documentary sources in the 12th and 13th centuries. This pattern of arable agriculture, where two or more large fields were divided into individual strips whereby the local people held scattered strips among them, was probably in place by the late Saxon period. Ridge and furrow earthworks⁴⁶, the physical remains of medieval ploughing, have been identified on aerial photographs to the east of Eccleshall, near Pirehill and in the wider area around Marston⁴⁷.

The open fields were often enclosed, within Staffordshire, from the late medieval period onwards by a means of piecemeal enclosure. This process was carried out through a means of informal, verbal agreements between farmers who wished to consolidate their holdings into a block rather than being scattered across two or more fields. The piecemeal enclosure is identifiable in the landscape through the fossilisation of medieval plough lines in the field boundaries as a reverse 'S' or as a dog-leg shape. Piecemeal enclosure occurred at different dates across the county, but had begun by the 13th century⁴⁸. Fourteen of the historic farmsteads are closely associated with areas of piecemeal enclosure; one of these is Quaker Farm, which pre-dates the 17th century. Ten farms, including Quaker Farm, have origins which cannot be closely dated, but it is possible that they developed as part of the enclosure of this landscape from the late medieval and post medieval periods. Large areas of piecemeal enclosure remain legible across the landscape of the HECA.

The remaining historic field systems are mostly 18th/19th century planned fields which were enclosed by surveyors using straight field boundaries and so creating fields and road systems with strong geometric patterns. The origins of much of this planned landscape is unknown, much of it may have been created out of areas of heath land, but some may represent the enclosure of open fields or the re-organisation of earlier enclosures. Eleven of the historic farmsteads, which lie within or adjacent to areas of planned enclosure exhibit regular courtyard plans and this perhaps suggests the enclosure of heathland with the planting of new farms. However, Enson House Farm has a 17th century farmhouse, suggesting the re-planning of the landscape and farmstead. Three farmsteads suggest incremental development and may again suggest the re-planning of earlier enclosures.

Of a similar date to the planned enclosure are the watermeadows which lie along part of the River Sow, particularly around Eccleshall, and on the River Trent to the west of Stone. The development of water meadows during this period meant that the landowners could control the flooding of the land and

⁴⁵ Open Field: An area of arable land with common rights after harvest or while fallow. Usually without internal divisions (hedges, walls or fences). (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

⁴⁶ Ridge & furrow: A series of long, raised ridges separated by ditches used to prepare the ground for arable cultivation. This was a technique, characteristic of the medieval period. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

⁴⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04578, 04589, 20362, 20400, 20401 and MST 14319

⁴⁸ Yates 1974: 46 - 61

ensure an early crop of grass and subsequent multiple crops for fodder. This enabled them to over-winter larger numbers of animals.

Swynnerton Hall to the north of the character area was constructed in c.1725⁴⁹ and a landscape park was established to the south of it with its associated plantations. The famous 18th century landscape gardener, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown drew up plans for the park, some of which were implemented. Although some of Brown's planting survives the parkland was remodelled in the early to mid 19th century and this is the layout which largely survives⁵⁰.

Overall, the historic landscape character of the area, although exhibiting a diversity of form and origins, survives well. A few historic field systems have been impacted by the large scale removal of field boundaries to improve arable productivity during the second half of the 20th century. The most notable 20th century feature in the landscape is the M6 which bisects the HECA on a north-south alignment. Two service stations, on either side of the carriageway, have also been imposed upon the landscape.

Designated Historic Environment Assets

Three Scheduled Monuments lie within the character area. There are also 102 Listed Buildings and three Conservation Areas. Hopton Registered Battlefield lies adjacent to the east.

Historic Environment Considerations

The medieval origins of the landscape are still discernible in the form of the later piecemeal enclosure. Historic settlement survives in the form of the town of Eccleshall and villages which have Saxon or medieval origins. A large number of farmsteads can also be found across the character area, some of which may also have medieval or early post medieval origins. Later historic landscape character includes areas of 18th/19th century planned enclosure, an 18th/early 19th century Landscape Park and watermeadows. Some of the farmsteads appear to be associated with specific landscapes.

Consequently any future development within the character area would need to consider the following issues:

- Potential impact upon the surviving dispersed settlement pattern and in particular where the origins of the landscape are closely tied to the origins of the farmsteads.
- The impacts upon the farmsteads, particularly those with surviving historic buildings.
- Potential impact upon the historic character of the landscape and how this could be retained or reflected in any development; particularly where it is strongly associated with the historic built environment.

⁴⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07808

⁵⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 20744

- How development may impact upon the designated sites and their settings.
- It would need to assess the impacts upon above and below ground archaeology.

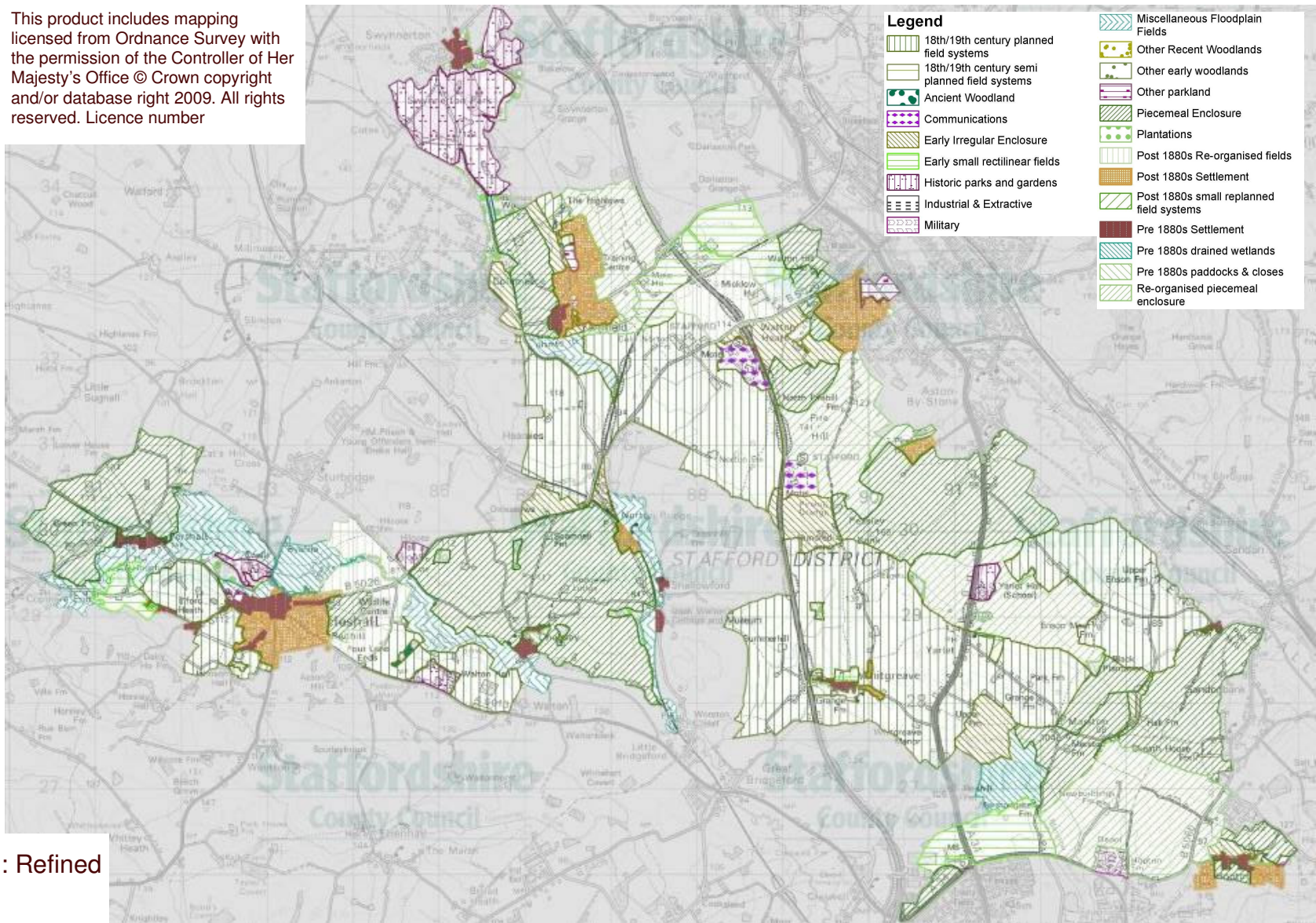
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Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 5g

Introduction

This document forms an overview of the HECA which specifically addresses the potential of medium to large scale development to impact upon the historic environment.

The historic landscape character is dominated by field systems which have seen considerable field boundary removal during the 20th century, although some surviving boundaries may fossilise an earlier historic landscape within their form. The historic settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farmsteads survives with little 20th century development except in some of the larger villages and at Cresswell.

The character area covers 2,257ha and lies wholly within Stafford Borough.

Archaeological and historic documentation

Very little archaeological or historic research has been carried out within the character area. All known information is recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by Staffordshire County Council.

Historic Environment Assets Summary

The current understanding of the later prehistoric landscape of the country suggests that it had mostly been heavily wooded until the Bronze Age. Some clearance may have begun to take place by this period to support a small scale pastoral economy when humans were settling down to farm specific landscapes. There is some evidence for human activity during the later prehistoric period within the character area. However, these relate to two finds; a Neolithic/Bronze Age stone axe found near Cresswell and a hammer and quern found near Ellenhall⁵¹. Such finds probably represent casual loss and do not add to our understanding of what activities were being carried out in the Neolithic and Bronze Age within the character area.

In the wider area there is some evidence for human activity lying to the north of the character area (see HECA 5f). Evidence includes a Scheduled Bronze Age barrow lying in Swynnerton Park⁵² along with a further two possible barrows noted in the 1940⁵³. At Pirehill a possible Bronze Age ring ditch⁵⁴ and a linear feature were identified on aerial photographs. Generally considered to be the remains of funeral monuments, such features when they

⁵¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 01651 and PRN 01672; Quern: A stone for grinding grain. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009).

⁵² Staffordshire HER: PRN 00501; English Heritage SM No. 22425

⁵³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 01837

⁵⁴ Ring Ditch: Circular or near circular ditches, usually seen as cropmarks. Use the term where the function is unknown. Ring ditches may be the remains of ploughed out round barrows, round houses, or of modern features such as searchlight emplacements. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

were constructed would have been designed to have been seen across the landscape and in this context they may also have functioned as territorial boundary markers. Their presence within the character area adds weight to the hypothesis that this landscape had been largely cleared by the Bronze Age. An undated enclosure, possibly of prehistoric date, was identified on aerial photographs between Chebsey and Norton Bridge⁵⁵.

The only evidence for Roman activity currently comes from stray finds, which includes 13 sherds of pottery from Wootton to the south of Eccleshall as well as a coin and a brooch from a similar area⁵⁶.

Evidence for human activity in the Saxon period almost exclusively comes from references to entries in Domesday Book (1086). Four surviving settlements were recorded, Great Bridgeford, Seighford, Walton and Ellenhall, all of which were recorded as part of two larger manors, Eccleshall and Sugnall. Wootton, a dispersed settlement which straddles the southern boundary of the character area, was also recorded in Domesday Book. It also belonged to Sugnall manor.

There is documentary and archaeological evidence for further medieval settlement within the character area. Worston, first mentioned in documentary sources in the late 12th century, and Horseley, first recorded in the late 13th century, were both probably larger in the medieval period than they are in the 21st century⁵⁷. A moat survives at Oncote, which was probably present by the late 14th century when the site is first recorded in documents⁵⁸. The remains of a medieval church survive associated with the settlement of Cresswell within HECA 5g. The precise location of the medieval settlement is unknown, but it appears to have been deserted by the 17th century⁵⁹. However, the modern settlement of Cresswell lies along the A5013, although its origins date to the inter-war period.

The character area is also dominated by country estates one of which had been established by the 17th century; Seighford Hall⁶⁰. Two further estates were established by the late 18th century, but which may have earlier origins. These were Cresswell Hall and Johnson Hall, both of which were marked on Yates' map of Staffordshire (1775), although Cresswell Hall was demolished in the 20th century. Horseley Hall was established in the last two decades of the 19th century, although an earlier hall, also marked on Yates' map, existed to the south west, now the site of Horseley Farm. All of these country houses had landscape parks by the late 19th century, with parkland features surviving at Horseley Hall, including an ornamental lake, and at Seighford Hall where there are ornamental plantations⁶¹. A few parkland features also survive at Johnson Hall⁶². Wilkes Wood is one of the few surviving features from the

⁵⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 03684

⁵⁶ Staffordshire HER: PRN 01660; FST 4897 and FST 4898

⁵⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 02635 and PRN 02622

⁵⁸ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00808

⁵⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00044; SM number 26

⁶⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 08143

⁶¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 40110, PRN 20043 and 40121

⁶² Staffordshire HER: PRN 40107

parkland at Cresswell and it continues to form the backdrop to the surviving stables of Cresswell Hall which have been converted to residential use⁶³.

The settlement pattern remains one of a dispersed nature of villages and hamlets. There are also 28 surviving historic farmsteads scattered across the character area, although four have been demolished during the 20th century. There are two major farmstead plan types across the landscape; 61% are of a regular courtyard plan, which nationally mostly date from the late 18th century⁶⁴. The regular courtyard plan is the most common form in Staffordshire and is spread widely across the landscape. This form appears to represent a deliberate development aimed at improving agricultural productivity being taken forward by wealthy landowners at this period. Therefore the high percentage of these regular courtyards across the HECA may be due in part to the number of country estates as discussed above, who had the time and wealth to become engaged with agricultural improvements from the late 18th century onwards. Only one of the regular courtyard farmsteads is associated with listed buildings. The home farm of Seighford Hall includes a 17th century timber framed farm, but it is clear from an adjacent listed building, the former coach house and dovecote, that it was modernised at some point during the 19th century⁶⁵. The remaining regular courtyard farmsteads have not been closely dated

The other major farmstead plan form within the character area is the loose courtyard plan, which is not as easily dated as some examples across England have shown medieval origins; however the majority appear to be post medieval period to 19th century in date. The plan form does, however, suggest incremental development over a number of years if not centuries. Ten farmsteads in the character area have been identified as being of a loose courtyard plan. Three of these farmsteads are associated with listed buildings of various dates, perhaps re-affirming the nature of the loose courtyard plan. The farmhouse at The Gables dates to the 16th century, whilst Bridgeford Hall is a farmhouse of 17th century date. In both of these instances the farmsteads themselves have undergone considerable alteration during the 20th century⁶⁶. The farmstead at Acton Hill Farm, where many of the farm buildings appear to survive, dates to the early 19th century, which may suggest some form of re-establishment of this farmstead⁶⁷.

By the late medieval period much of the character area formed open fields⁶⁸, which were probably farmed by the inhabitants of these scattered settlements. This pattern of arable agriculture, where two or more large fields were divided into individual strips whereby the local people held scattered strips among them, was probably in place by the late Saxon period. A watermill was recorded in Domesday Book at Cresswell (see HECA 5g) which supports the importance of arable agriculture in this landscape.

⁶³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 40122

⁶⁴ Lake 2009: 19

⁶⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 08144 and PRN 08145

⁶⁶ Staffordshire HER: PRN 08151 and PRN 08150

⁶⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07327

⁶⁸ Open Field: An area of arable land with common rights after harvest or while fallow. Usually without internal divisions (hedges, walls or fences). (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

The open fields were often enclosed, within Staffordshire, from the late medieval period onwards in the form of piecemeal enclosure. This process was carried out through a means of informal, verbal agreements between farmers who wished to consolidate their holdings into a block rather than being scattered across two or more fields. Most of the historic farmsteads are associated with this type of enclosure and their origins may be closely associated with its spread across the character area.

The piecemeal enclosure has been impacted particularly during 20th century, as a result of field boundary removal. However, these field systems may retain some legibility of their origins as medieval open fields and later resulting piecemeal enclosure within the surviving field boundaries. Other historic field systems, which have similarly been impacted by later 20th century field boundary removal or through the establishment of a golf course are the 18th/19th century planned fields, which were originally enclosed by surveyors using straight field boundaries and so creating fields with strong geometric patterns. Some 18th/19th century planned fields survive to the north of Seighford airfield (see attached map). The historic farmsteads, both the regular courtyards and loose courtyard plans, are now all associated with these enlarged 20th century field systems and 20 of them have undergone alteration during this century. This is testimony to the continuing importance of arable agriculture within the character area.

Other than the changes seen within the field systems across the character area and the development of Cresswell along the A5013, the 20th century saw the development of Seighford airfield and the adjacent industrial units. A golf course has also been established to the north of the character area.

Designated Historic Environment Assets

There are eleven Listed Buildings located within the HECA.

Historic Environment Considerations

The historic dispersed settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and historic farmsteads has survived with little alteration within the landscape. Several landscape parks, retaining parkland features, also survive across the landscape.

There is the potential for below ground archaeological remains to survive across the landscape and particularly within the historic cores and associated with known areas of early settlement.

Consequently any future development with the character area would need to consider the following issues:

- Potential impact upon the surviving dispersed settlement pattern.
- The impacts upon the farmsteads, particularly those with surviving historic buildings.

















- Potential impact upon those aspects of the historic character of the landscape which is still legible within the character area and how this could be retained or reflected in any development; particularly where it is strongly associated with the historic built environment.
- Impacts and opportunities to enhance the landscape parks and their surviving parkland features.
- How development may impact upon the designated sites and their settings.
- It would need to assess the impacts upon above and below ground archaeology.

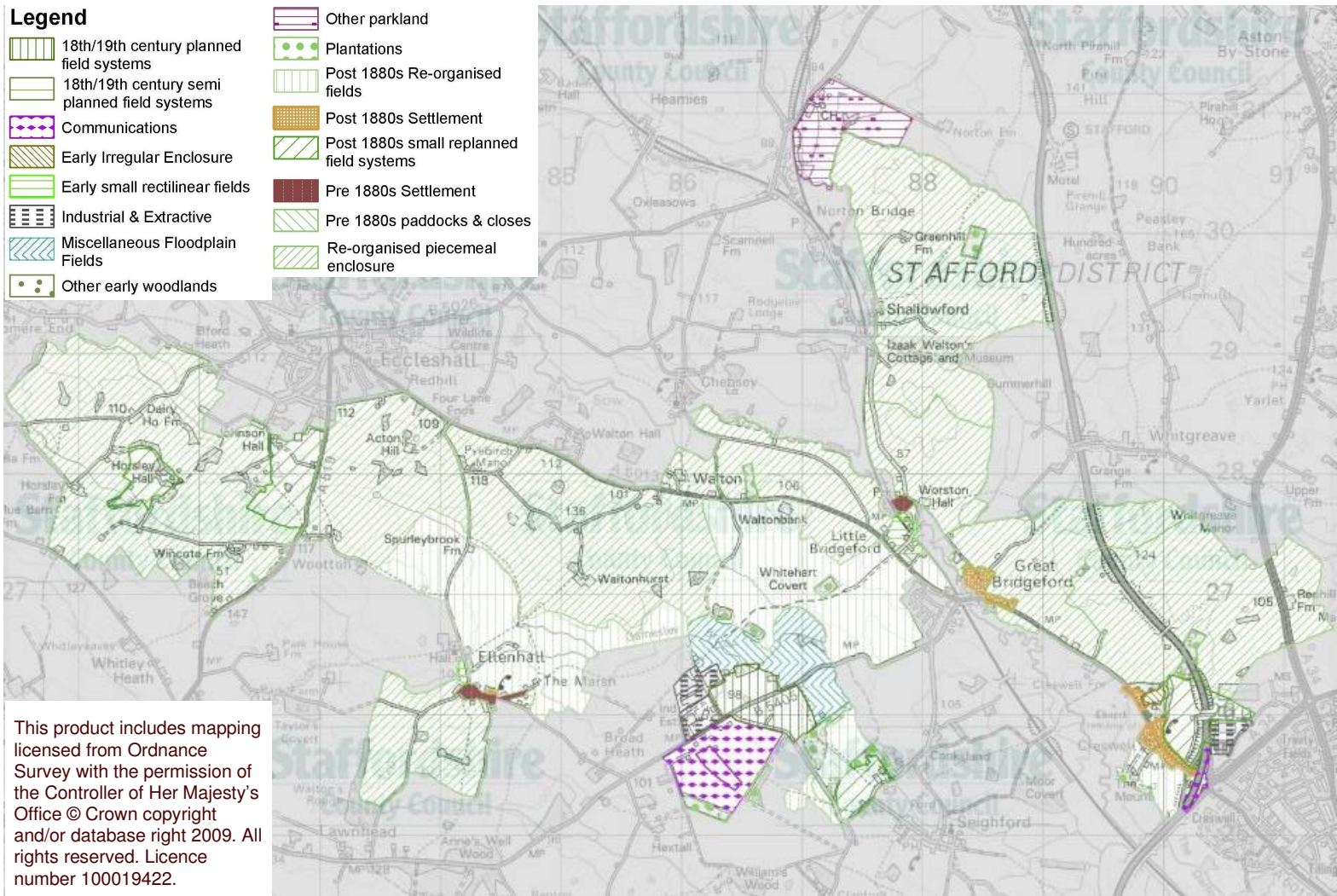
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Legend

-  18th/19th century planned field systems
-  18th/19th century semi planned field systems
-  Communications
-  Early Irregular Enclosure
-  Early small rectilinear fields
-  Industrial & Extractive
-  Miscellaneous Floodplain Fields
-  Other early woodlands
-  Other parkland
-  Plantations
-  Post 1880s Re-organised fields
-  Post 1880s Settlement
-  Post 1880s small replanned field systems
-  Pre 1880s Settlement
-  Pre 1880s paddocks & closes
-  Re-organised piecemeal enclosure



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Map 1: Refined HLC