

Historic Environment Character Assessment Eccleshall Environs



Final Report for Stafford Borough Council August 2009



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August 2009

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This project was commissioned by the Forward Planning Section at Stafford Borough Council, with funding support from English Heritage, to form part of the evidence base for the options assessment of their local spatial strategy.
- 1.1.2 A methodology for assessing historic environment information has emerged from work carried out in the southern counties of England in response to proposed large scale housing developments. The particular aim of these projects was to integrate the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) information with the more site based data held by the Historic Environment Records (HERs). Historic environment assessments were pioneered by the Thames Gateway Project, which was further developed by Essex County Council for two of its districts. More recently Shropshire County Council undertook a historic environment assessment for the Shrewsbury New Growth Point area. This work was assessed using the criteria produced by Essex County Council.
- 1.1.3 Staffordshire County Council (SCC) in conjunction with Lichfield District Council and English Heritage produced a Historic Environment Assessment (HEA) for Lichfield, Burntwood and Tamworth in February 2009. This followed the methodology used by Shropshire County Council taken from the 'Shrewsbury New Growth Point Historic Environment Assessment: Project Design'.
- 1.1.4 It was agreed between the SCC Cultural Heritage Team, English Heritage and Stafford Borough Council (SBC) that the historic environment assessment for Stafford would follow the methodology used in the Lichfield District Historic Environment Assessment.
- 1.1.5 The HEA for Eccleshall does not include the extent of the modern development of the town which is being covered by a separate project, the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) of the county's towns.

1.2 Historic Landscape Character (HLC)

- 1.2.1 The HLC project forms part of a national mapping project. It was carried out by SCC in partnership with English Heritage, over three years and was completed in March 2006. The aim of the HLC was to produce a broad assessment of the historic and archaeological dimensions of the county's landscape as it exists today, which was produced upon a GIS-based digital map supported by a database. The HLC data sits within the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) database. The HER holds information on the county's archaeological and historic sites, monuments and buildings.
- 1.2.2 The HLC is a dynamic model for the county and subsequent to its production the dataset has been assessed to produce refined maps and a map of the late medieval landscape of the county. Both of these maps have been used to

understand change within the county and they were both used in the development of this project.

- 1.2.3 The HLC and HER data form the basis of the Historic Environment Assessment for Eccleshall.

1.3 *Integrated Environment Assessment*

- 1.3.1 The Stafford Borough HEA is also based upon work being carried out by the SCC Cultural Heritage Team for the whole county through a process of Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA). The IEA is currently in progress and will integrate data from the historic environment, biodiversity and landscape character. The first phase of the historic environment aspect of the IEA divided the county into Historic Environment Character Areas (HECAs). These were based upon an understanding of the development of the landscape of the county from the medieval/post medieval period onwards based upon the HLC data. Across Staffordshire 77 HECAs were identified and the second phase of the work for the IEA is to integrate the HER data. It was established in the Lichfield Historic Environment Assessment (HEA) that the results of the HECA would feed into an overall understanding of the historic environment across the whole district. Consequently the HECAs covering Stafford Borough are similarly included as part of this report.

2. **Aim**

- 2.1 The aim of the project was to provide an overview of the historic environment of the district through the HECAs at a broad level. For the buffered area around Eccleshall a more detailed assessment of the historic environment character was undertaken. The assessment included a scoring system to evaluate the impact of medium to large scale housing development upon each of the zones. The extent of the project area to be assessed was agreed between the Cultural Heritage Team, SCC and Stafford Borough Council; being an approximately 500m buffer around the built-up extent of the town.

3. **Project Methodology**

3.1 *Overview*

- 3.1.1 The methodology was undertaken in two phases and the relationship between these phases is shown in figure 1. The first phase was to identify the Historic Environment Character Areas (HECAs) falling within the Borough. The HECAs provide an overview of the historic environment across the Borough. The second phase was to look more closely at those parts of the HECAs which fell within the project area around Eccleshall. The HECAs were subdivided into Historic Environment Character Zones (HECZs) for Eccleshall. The HECZs are more geographically discrete than the HECAs which enabled a more detailed analysis of the historic environment to be carried out.

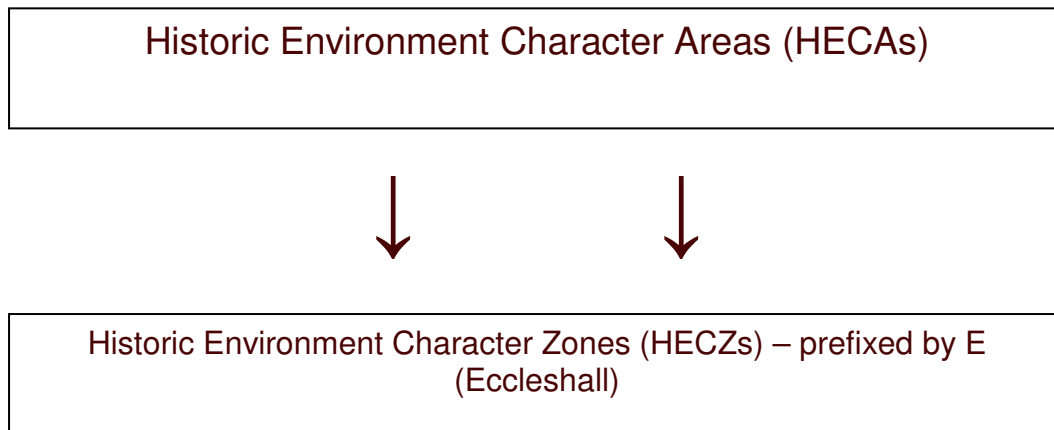


Figure 1

3.1.2 The results of the HECZs element of the project forms Appendix 3 of this document.

3.2 *Phase 1 – Historic Environment Character Areas*

3.2.1 The first phase of the Eccleshall HEA was to develop the work being carried out for the IEA by integrating the HER data into the countywide HECAs.

3.2.2 A separate report for each HECA that lies around Eccleshall will be produced which provides an overview of the historic environment. This incorporates the HLC with the HER data and is informed by a general understanding of the topographic, land form and general drift geological influences upon human activity and agency.

3.2.3 The final section of each HECA report, the Historic Environment Considerations, looks at the impact of medium to large scale development within each of the character areas and addresses issues which should be addressed by any future development proposals. These considerations will be partly based upon the West Midlands Research Frameworks for archaeological work within the Region. However, these documents were not fully completed at the time of this study and this report will need to be updated once the final versions are published.

3.3 *Phase 2 – Historic Environment Character Zones*

3.3.1 The second phase was to provide a more detailed Historic Environment Assessment of project area around Eccleshall.

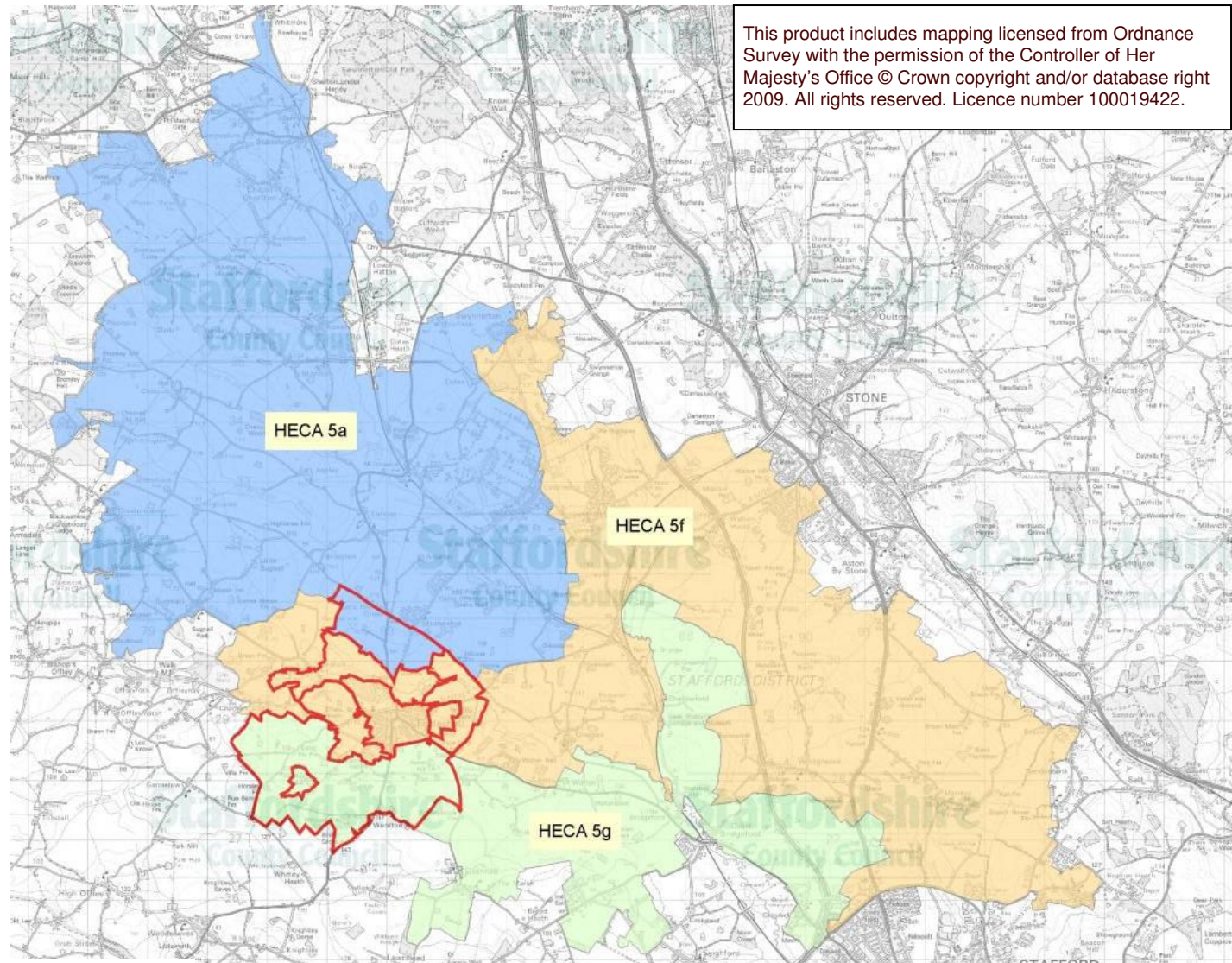
3.3.2 The methodology for this section follows that established by the Lichfield District HEA using the Essex County Council model for assessing significance (see appendix 1). This produced a scoring system based upon set criteria. A GIS layer was also produced of all the zones which ranks them in terms of their significance.

3.3.3 The reports summarise the main areas of interest followed by the archaeological and historic character of each zone. This information is

brought together and analysed following the model for significance detailed in Appendix 1.

3.4 Potential uses for the document

- 3.4.1 The assessment was produced specifically for the Stafford Borough housing allocation areas and has identified areas where the historic environment is a consideration when assessing the most appropriate location for new housing development. The summary of each report provides a short paragraph on the importance of the historic environment in each zone along with guidance or advice on the ways in which development may have an impact upon the historic environment.
- 3.4.2 The documents can be used to identify historic environment considerations at an early stage in the planning process within each zone. The reports summarise the potential historic environment impacts and opportunities that would need to be taken into account to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment assets within the Borough.
- 3.4.3 The project provides an initial assessment of the potential for the historic environment within each zone. However the assessment is not intended to replace the need to consult the SCC Cultural Heritage Team at an early stage to identify potential impacts and the possible need for mitigation on individual development sites or areas.



Map 1: HECAs and EHECZs

4. Summary Analysis of the Eccleshall HECAs

- 4.1 There are three HECAs that coincide with the Eccleshall HEA project area which were identified by their earliest discoverable landscapes. The overview reports for each of the HECAs can be founded under Appendix 2.
- 4.2 The legends shown below should be used in reference with the following maps which are included under this chapter.

Legend

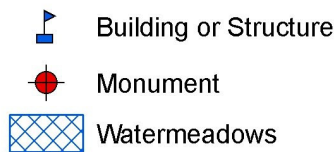


Fig. 2: Legend for the HER data maps

Legend

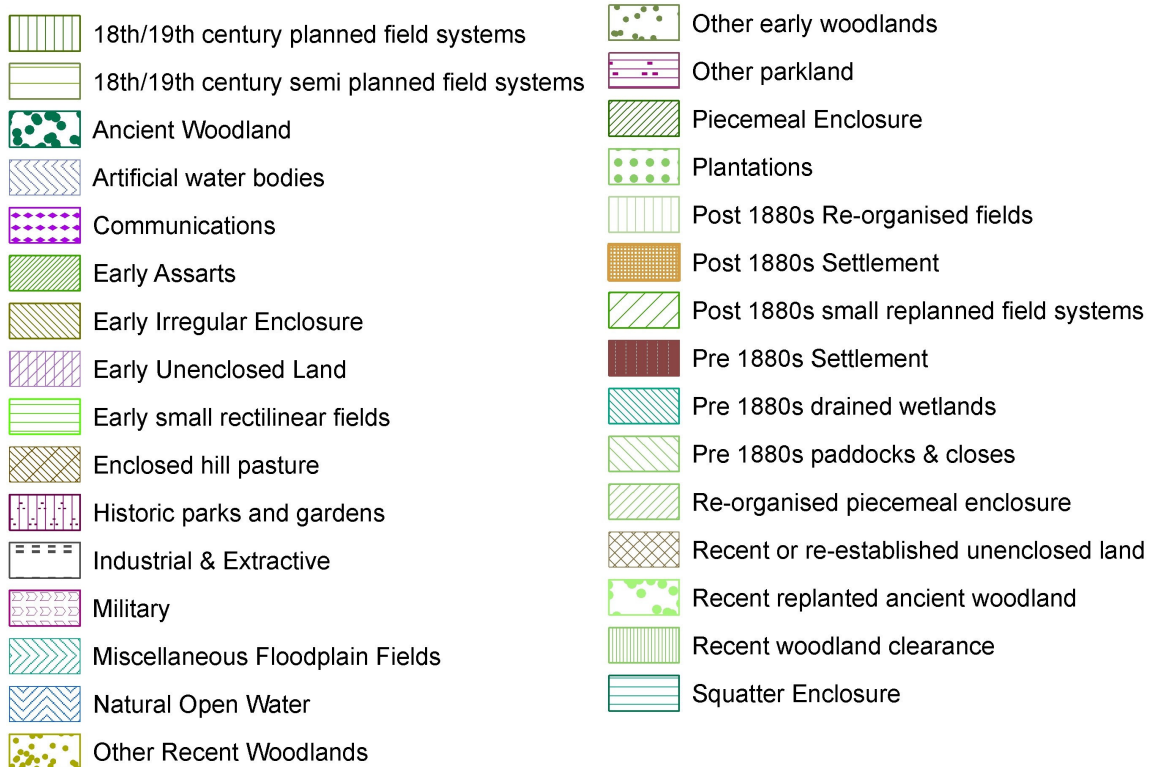


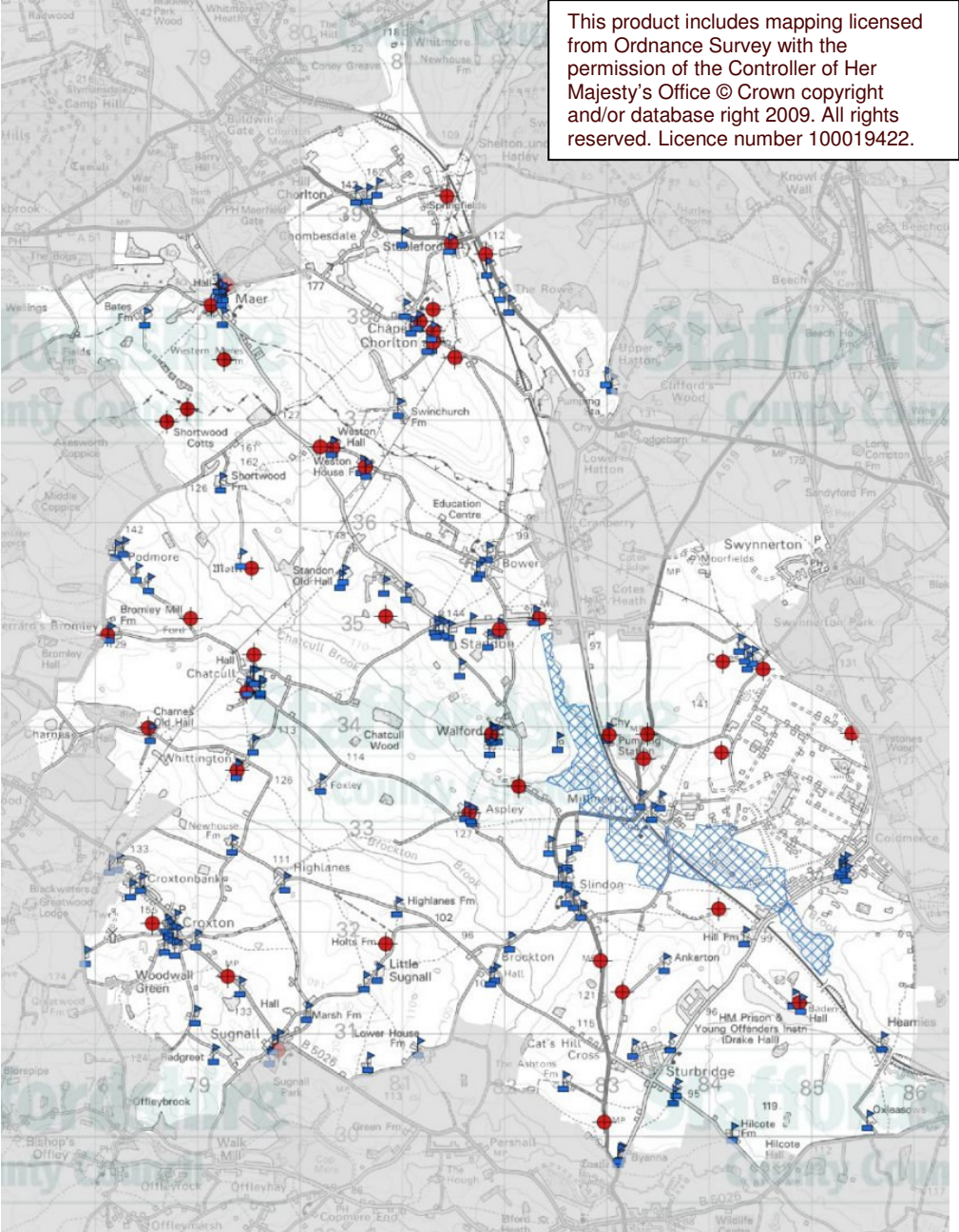
Fig. 3: Legend for the Refined HLC maps

4.3 HECAs 5a, 5f and 5g (see maps 1-7)

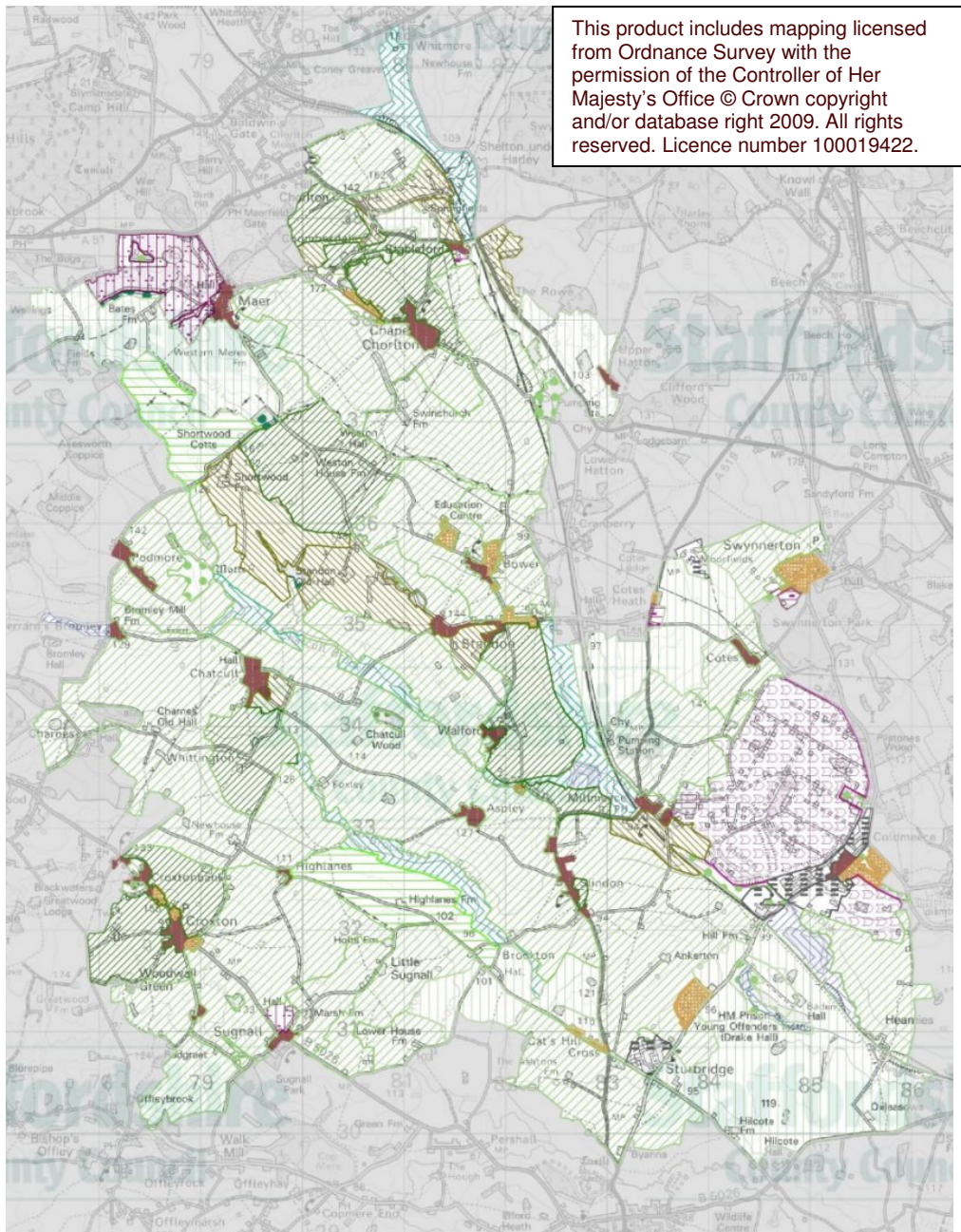
- 4.3.1 The character areas pre-fixed 5 cover much of western Staffordshire where arable open field agriculture was practiced from the medieval period. This landscape was largely enclosed piecemeal at various dates from the late medieval period until the later 18th century.
- 4.3.2 Numerous settlements, from villages to farmsteads, are scattered throughout these character areas. There are also several towns, including Eccleshall, whose origins lie in the Saxon period.
- 4.3.3 Generally little archaeological work has been carried out and further research is required to understand much of the earlier development of the landscape. However, various monuments of prehistoric and Roman date have been identified which suggest a degree of human activity.

HECA	HECZ	Historic Character	Historic Environment Potential
5a	6	The zone is dominated by 20 th century historic landscape character mainly represented by field systems. The historic settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farmsteads survives with little 20 th century development. There is some evidence for human activity across the area mostly relating to stray finds. However, further evidence exists in adjacent HECAs.	There is the potential for archaeological deposits to survive associated with the historic settlements, but also for currently unknown sites across the landscape. There are surviving medieval structures, mostly Listed Buildings, but also a Scheduled moated site. There are over 100 surviving historic farmsteads.
5f	2-5	A generally well preserved field system of late medieval/post medieval origin survives. It retains evidence for a medieval open field system. The historic settlement pattern of villages and farmsteads also survive. It includes the small historic market town of Eccleshall. There is some evidence for human activity across the area, although it has not been studied in detail.	There is the potential for archaeological deposits to survive, particularly associated with the historic settlements. There are also surviving 74 historic farmsteads.
5g	1	The zone is dominated by 20 th century historic landscape character mainly represented by field systems. There is little known evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity in the character area, although it exists in the adjacent HECAs. Three landscape parks were established in the 18 th /19 th century and some features survive.	It is possible that currently unknown archaeological deposits survive across the area. There is further potential for archaeology to survive within the historic cores of the seven settlements which have medieval or earlier

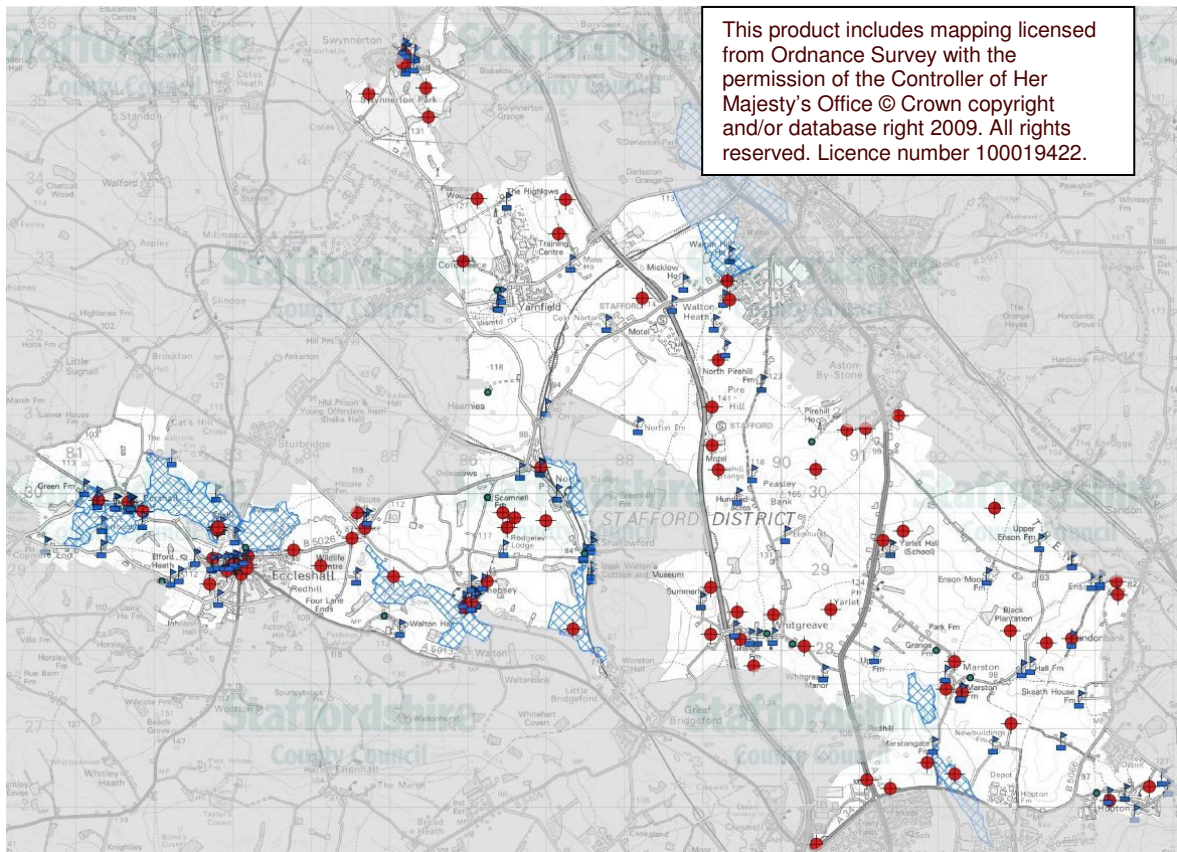
			origins. There are 28 surviving historic farmsteads.
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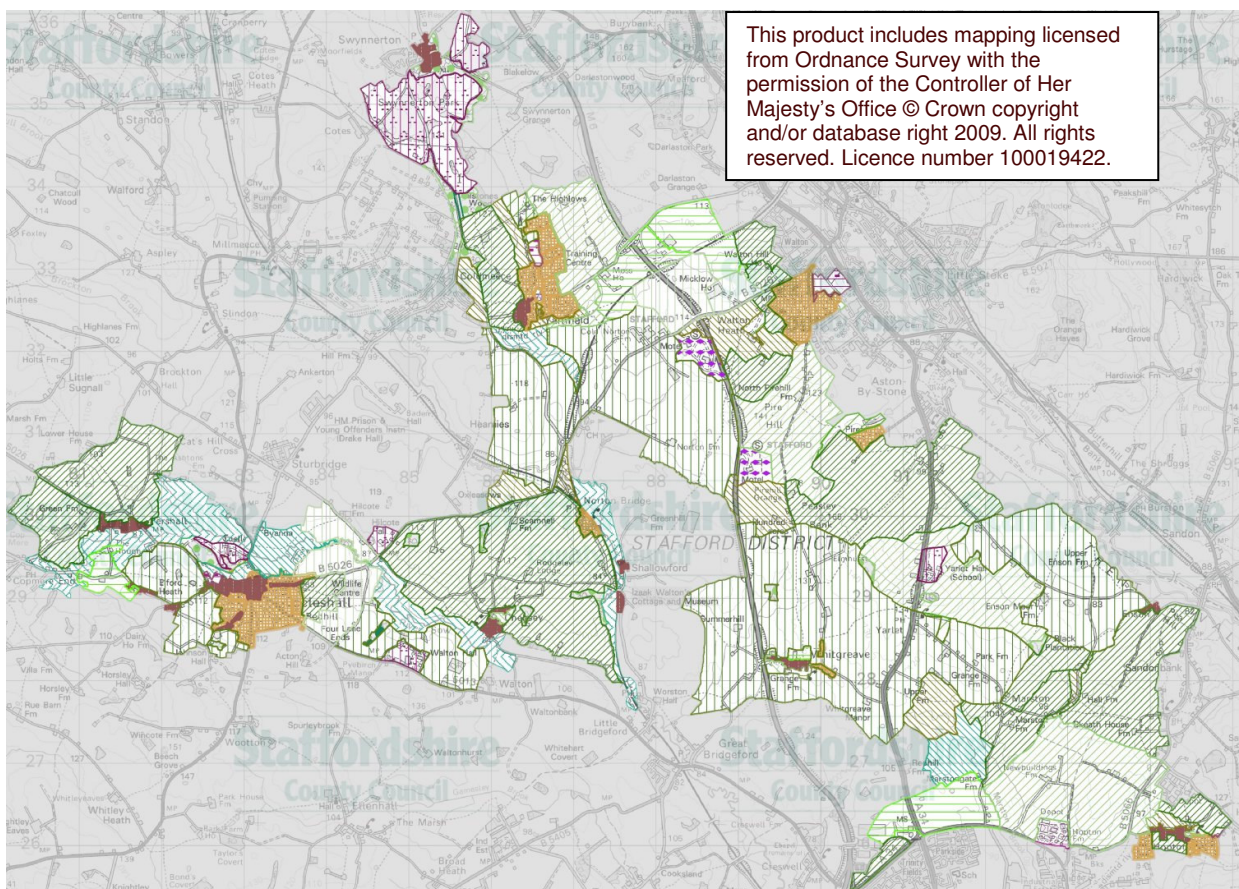
Map 2: HER data (excluding findspots and documentary evidence) for HECA 5a



Map 3: Refined HLC map for HECA 5a

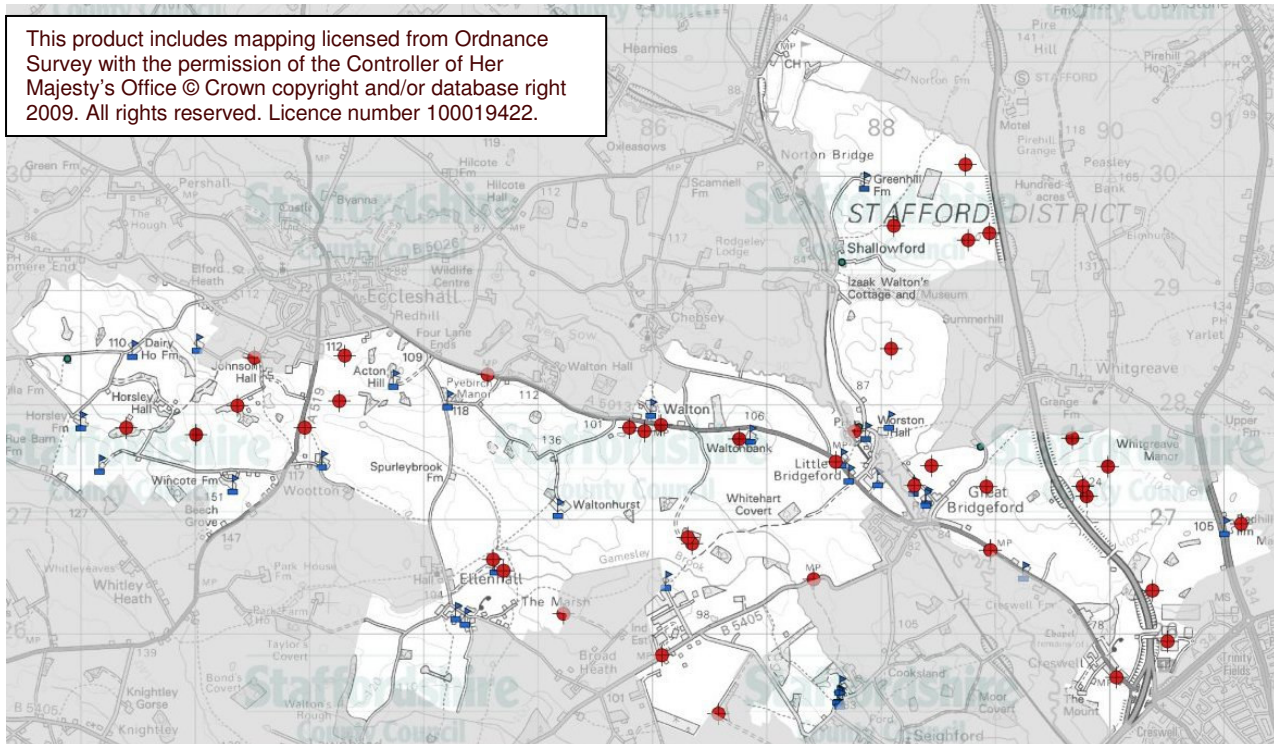


Map 4: HER data (excluding findspots and documentary evidence) for HECA 5f



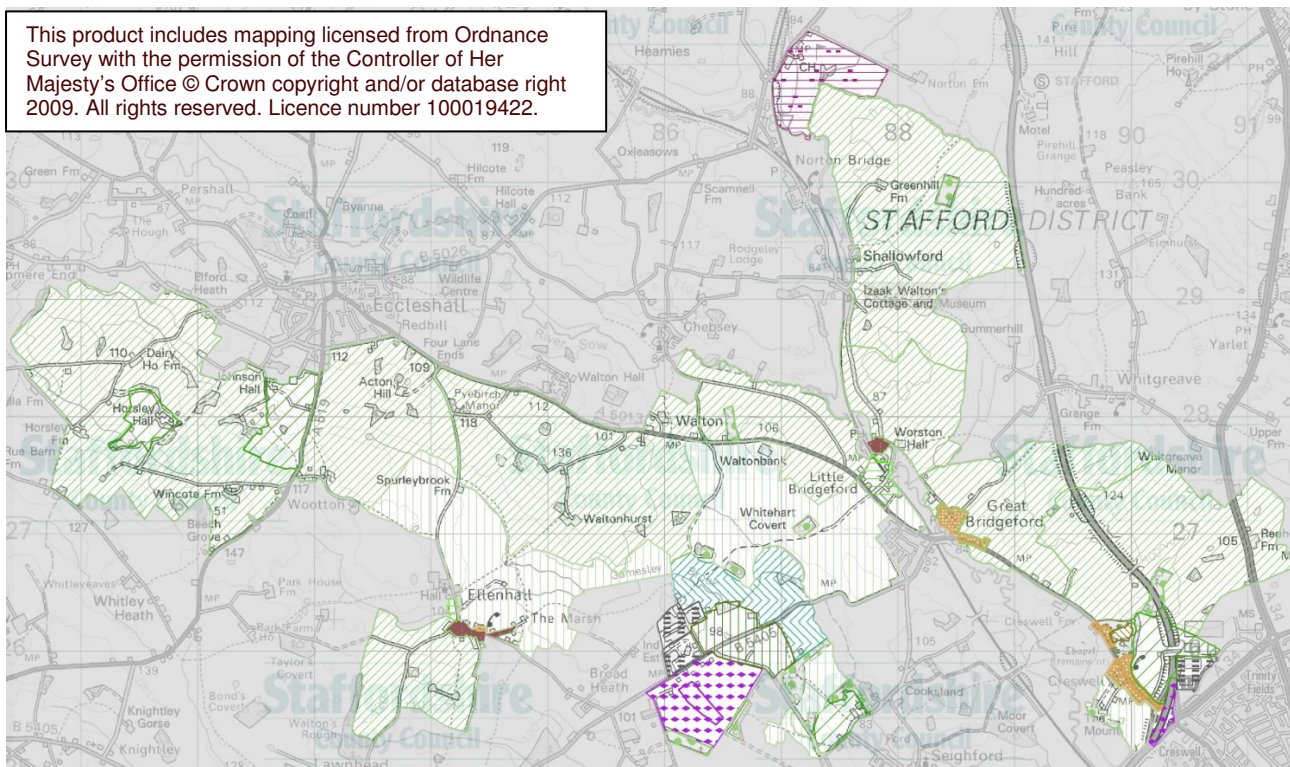
Map 5: Refined HLC map for HECA 5f

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Map 6: HER data (excluding findspots and documentary evidence) for HECA 5g

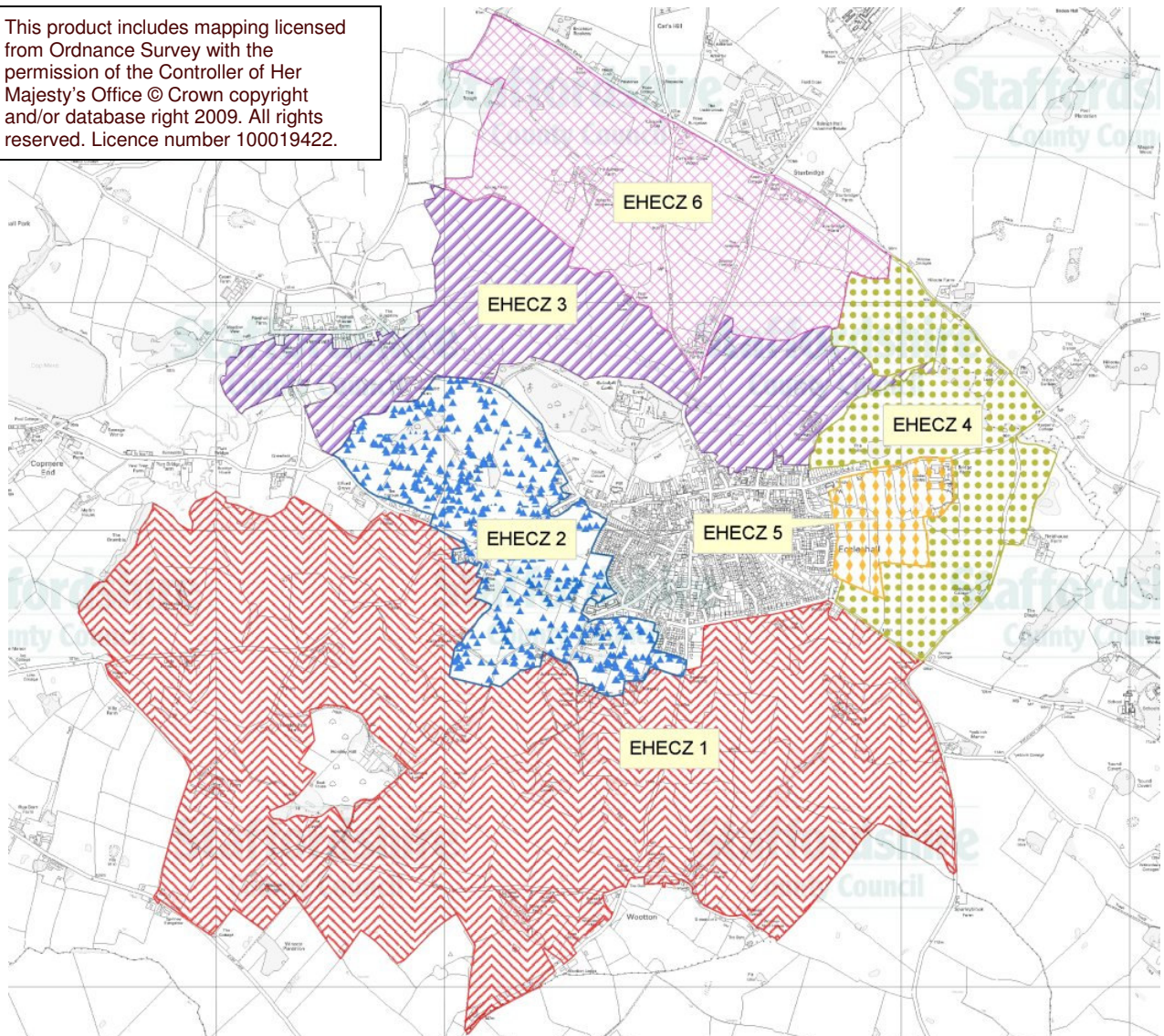
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Map 7: Refined HLC map for HECA 5g

5. Summary Results of the Eccleshall HECZS

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Map 8: Eccleshall Historic Environment Zones (EHECZ)

- 5.1 The project was scored on various categories and a final value was calculated between 7 and 21 (see Appendix 1). The results of the assessment (the total score) for each HECZ can be seen in map 9.
- 5.2 The highest scoring zone is EHECZ 3 which lies to the north of the town and adjacent to Eccleshall Castle, a Scheduled Monument, which was owned by the bishops of Lichfield from the medieval period until the late 19th century. This zone is dominated by the drained wetlands which line the River Sow. The landscape was drained by one of the bishops during the mid 18th century creating a series of water meadows which partially survive. This zone is likely to have provided an important setting to the castle throughout its history. EHECZ 2 represents a landscape of 18th/19th century planned enclosures and the small settlement of Elford Heath, which may have medieval origins.

- 5.3 EHECZs 5 and 6 are the more sensitive of the remaining zones, where the field patterns survive and the legibility of the historic landscape character is still discernible. The remaining two zones have both been impacted considerably by field boundary removal during the 20th century.
- 5.2 However, even in the zones where the scores are low there are still likely to be impacts upon particular aspects of the historic environment in these zones and mitigation strategies may be required should development proceed. The EHECZ reports in Appendix 3 provide summaries of the historic environment considerations recommended for each zone. The scores for each of the EHECZs are set out in Table 1.

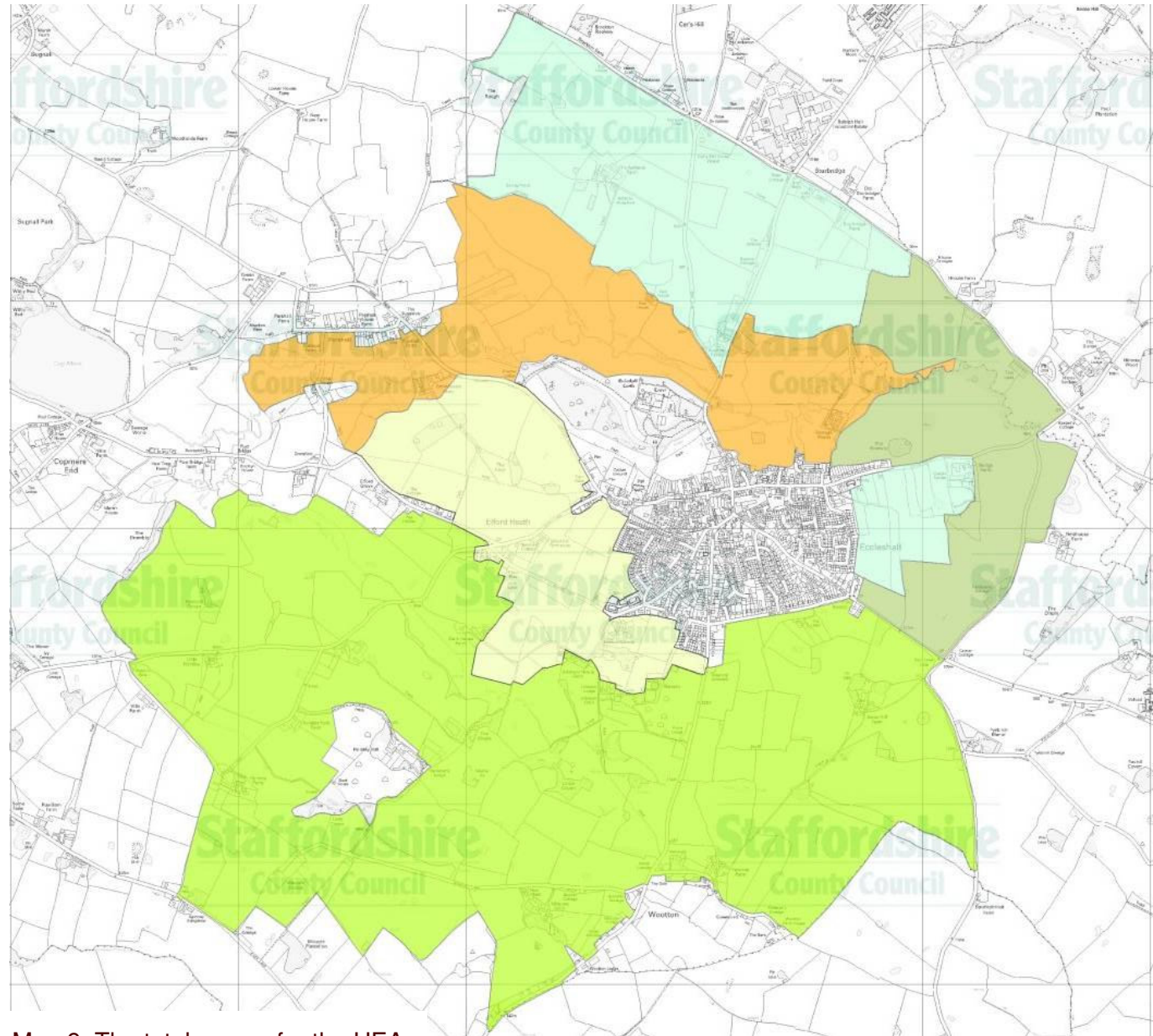
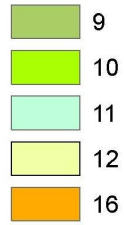
EHECZ		Overall Value
1	South of Eccleshall	10
2	Elford Heath	12
3	Sow Valley north of Eccleshall	16
4	East of Eccleshall	9
5	South of Stone Road, Eccleshall	11
6	South of Sturbridge	11

Table 1: EHECZ values

Please see the text for each EHECZ's in Appendix 3.

Legend

Value



Map 9: The total scores for the HEA

6. Glossary

Anglo-Saxon	Period dating between 410 AD and 1065 AD
Assart	A piece of forest land converted into arable *
Bronze Age	Period dating between 2350 BC to 701 BC
Cropmark	Monument visible as a mark in standing crops, parchmarks or soilmarks, but where no subsurface deposits have been proven eg by excavation or other ground disturbance *
Earthwork	Monument existing as an upstanding earthwork, ditch or artificial watercourse, or as a low stone built feature *
Iron Age	Period dating between 800 BC to 42 AD
Staffordshire HER	Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (held by Staffordshire County Council)
Lodge	A small building, often inhabited by a gatekeeper, gamekeeper or similar *
Mansio	A type of Roman lodging house, frequently sited near the town gate *
Mesolithic	Period dating between 10,000 BC to 4,001 BC
Moat	A wide ditch surrounding a building, usually filled with water *
Neolithic	Period dating between 4,000 BC to 2,351 BC
Open Field	An area of arable land with common rights after harvest or while fallow. Usually without internal divisions (hedges, walls or fences).*
Palaeolithic	Period dating between 500,000 BC to 10,001 BC
Roman	Period dating between 43 AD to 409 AD
VCH	Victoria County History for Staffordshire – copies located within the Staffordshire HER
Warren	An area used for the breeding and rearing of rabbits *
Warrener	The keeper of the Warren

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Appendix 1: The scoring of Historic Environment Character Zones (adapted from Essex County Council)

Essex County Council based scoring upon the system used by the English Heritage Monuments Protection Programme (MPP). The system was adapted to consider broader landscapes.

They used the following seven criteria:

- Diversity of historic environment assets
- Survival
- Documentation
- Group Value Association
- Potential
- Sensitivity to change
- Amenity Value

Each of the criteria has been scored for each of the zones with a rating of 1, 2 and 3, with 1 being the lowest.

Survival

This relates to the state of completeness of the range of HEAs within the character zone. The zone may be relatively well preserved or it may have been disturbed by particular land-use/development and/or erosion. Even where such factors have adversely affected assets within a zone there may be potential for well preserved but deeply buried deposits.

1 = Zone extensively disturbed by for instance quarrying or development. The likelihood is that whilst many of the assets have been disturbed or destroyed there is the potential for survival in some areas or of some types of asset.

2 = Zone has moderate disturbance, but there are few known assets, or where there are many known assets but there has been some adverse effects from, for instance, development, quarrying or ploughing.

3 = Zone contains little disturbance and known assets which are well preserved.

Potential

The potential is assessed with reference to the expected average circumstances within the zone. The score considers the nature of the HEAs based on current evidence and indicates the likelihood of further assets being present.

1 = The potential for surviving HEAs within the zone has been significantly reduced e.g. by quarrying or development

2 = There are limited known HEAs however the landscape has not been significantly disturbed and current lack of knowledge is probably the result of lack of investigation rather than poor preservation

3 = Current evidence and little disturbance indicates that a range of high quality assets probably survive within the zone or there is a high potential for deeply stratified deposits to survive.

Documentation

The level of documentation for a zone reflects the extent of investigations that have taken place. HER data includes grey literature, find spots, the Domesday survey and broad brush county wide surveys, such as that on the Historic Farmsteads. Other surveys are separated out as having only been undertaken in certain parts of the county or within certain landscape types.

1 = Little or no documentation

2 = A range of documentation including field work, historical documentation, aerial photography

3 = A wide range of documentation

Diversity of historic environment assets

This indicates the range of HEAs within the zone, which may be chronologically diverse. A zone with many would score highly.

1 = Very few known assets or many assets of a limited range of categories

2 = Contains a range of assets of different date and character

3 = Contains a wide range of assets both in character and date.

Group Value Association

Two forms of association are considered either HEAs of a similar nature or HEAs of a similar date.

1 = Contains few HEAs of a similar date or nature

2 = Contains a limited range of HEAs which are related or of a similar date

3 = Contains a range of HEAs which are related such as settlements with well preserved field systems.

Amenity Value

Relates to the actual and/or potential amenity value of the historic environment of the zone and this is indicated in the description box. If there are specific elements which would warrant enhancement these are also indicated in the description box. The score may relate to uniqueness, historical associations, key landmarks, good access, and interest for visitors and educational value etc.

1 = The historic environment does not lend itself to display or visitor attraction. Current knowledge gives limited potential for the historic environment to play a significant role in creating a definable and promotable identity to the area.

2 = The historic environment could or does help to define a sense of place for the area. There may be specific elements which are, or could be, promoted such as woodlands, castles etc.

3 = The historic environment plays or could play a key role in the zones sense of place for the local people and visitors. Contains assets which, are or could be, promoted for the benefit of local people and visitors.

Sensitivity to Change

Each HEZ is assessed with regard to the sensitivity of the area to medium to large scale development; specifically housing expansion. The score is an indication of the vulnerability of the HEAs within the zone to this type of change. A lack of sensitivity should not be taken as an indication that no historic environment mitigation would be required to accommodate development.

1 = The historic environment of the zone could accommodate medium to large scale development; however, specific HEAs may suffer adverse effects.

2 = Medium to large scale development is likely to have a moderate impact on the historic environment character of the zone.

3 = The zones historic environment is highly sensitive to medium to large scale development.