

## **Appendix 2: Historic Environment Character Area Overviews for Stafford**

This appendix provides an overview of the historic environment for each of the Historic Environment Character Areas (HECAs) within Stafford Borough.

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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Staffordshire County Council  
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## **Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 5b**

### **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 character area is dominated by 20<sup>th</sup> century housing development and field systems. Evidence of earlier farming practices and settlement do survive across the character area in the form of ridge and furrow earthworks, late medieval/post medieval field systems, moated sites and historic farmsteads.

Earlier activity has been recorded in the character area in the form of the hillfort at Berry Ring and evidence for prehistoric to Roman settlement at Acton Trussell. Such sites suggest the potential for further unknown archaeological deposits to survive across the HECA.

The character area covers 3,056ha and is split between Stafford Borough Council, to the north, and South Staffordshire Council to the south.

#### *Archaeological and historic documentation*

A number of archaeological assessments were carried out in the early 1990s for proposed large scale development. A few archaeological interventions have been carried out as part of the planning system. A programme of archaeological excavations has been carried out since 1985 upon the Roman villa site at Acton Trussell. The results of these archaeological works and other archaeological information are recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by Staffordshire County Council.

Two volumes of the Victoria County Histories series for Staffordshire, researched in the 1950s, cover most of the settlements across the character area.

### **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. However, these mostly relate to finds of tools such as the Neolithic axe found in the parish of Castle Church, Stafford and the Bronze Age spearhead found near Berry Ring<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 02741 and PRN 01787

A burnt mound<sup>2</sup> was discovered during excavations on the site of a Roman villa in the church yard at Acton Trussell. Burnt Mounds have generally been dated to the Bronze Age and although their function has been widely debated this evidence adds a further dimension to our understanding of human activity around the site of the church at Acton Trussell during the prehistoric and Roman periods. Neolithic and Bronze Age finds have also been recovered. Human activity from the Iron Age has also been identified in the in the form of several ditches or gullies and a shallow ditched enclosure which have been dated from the associated pottery assemblage. The evidence perhaps suggests continuous domestic and agricultural activity on this site certainly from the Iron Age, but possibly earlier through to the Roman period.

The Scheduled Berry Ring hillfort, to the north of the character area, represents one of the most iconic monuments associated with the Iron Age<sup>3</sup>. This defended site provided protection for local residents, functioned as a store for produce including grain and livestock and may have served as a marketplace and focus for feasting. This would suggest a well developed agrarian landscape and an organised community within this HECA capable of constructing and maintaining a significant defensive earthwork and typified by dispersed farmsteads, open fields and formal field boundaries. The site at Acton Trussell may represent one such farmstead.

The Roman villa<sup>4</sup> at Acton Trussell clearly has an earlier precursor and this site may represent the Romanisation of a pre-existing British family rather than new settlers. Several phases for the development of the villa have been identified; the last dated work being the re-construction of a wing in c. AD340. Later activity has been identified, but this has not currently been dated. Further evidence for wider occupation of the landscape during the Roman period has been discovered adjacent to Hill Farm (see HECA 14d).

Evidence for human activity in the Saxon period almost exclusively comes from references to entries in Domesday Book (1086). Seven surviving settlements were recorded two of which were included in the account for the manor of Bradley (see HECA 5c). The remaining five had between two and eighteen heads of household and were recorded with plough lands suggesting arable cultivation was being carried out. This hypothesis is supported at Acton Trussell by the presence of a mill. By the late medieval period much of the character area formed open fields<sup>5</sup>, which were probably farmed by the inhabitants of these scattered settlements. This pattern of arable agriculture,

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<sup>2</sup> Burnt mound: A mound of fire-cracked stones, normally accompanied by a trough or pit which may have been lined with wood, stone or clay. Assumed to be locations where heated stones were used to boil water primarily for cooking purposes. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009). However, other interpretations of their function have included the idea that they were used as a form of sauna or 'sweating lodge'.

<sup>3</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00024; English Heritage SM no. 21588

<sup>4</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 04003

<sup>5</sup> 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)

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 population count for these places in Domesday Book does not imply large settlements. Baswich, which is recorded as having two villagers and a priest, had the lowest population count, was the centre of a manor and the settlement of Walton-on-the-Hill belonged to it. The presence of the priest suggests that a church probably existed at Baswich prior to the Norman Conquest (1066). This evidence appears to be confirmed by two capitals in the chancel arch of the existing Holy Trinity church at Baswich, which have been tentatively dated to the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It is likely that St James' church at Acton Trussell, which has been dated to c.1300, was established as a chapel of ease<sup>6</sup> to the church at Baswich. St Lawrence's church at Coppenhall, dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, belonged to the church at Penkridge by 1267. A further two chapels of ease are known from documentary sources, at Derrington and Billington, but these have since disappeared.

Five medieval moats exist within the character area, three of them, Littywood, Acton Trussell and Hyde Lea, have been designated as Scheduled Monuments. Three of the moats are known to have been the seats of the lords of the manor of Burton, Acton Trussell and Littywood. The moat platform at Acton Trussell is believed to date to the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century, although the surviving buildings, which now form a hotel, were constructed in the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century, followed by extensions in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries<sup>7</sup>. The earliest part of the farmhouse at Littywood dates to c.1400 and was constructed as an open hall house, it has been substantially altered in the following centuries, principally in the later 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>8</sup>. The most unusual aspect of this double moated site is that the moats are circular. Little is currently known about the history of the moat at Stallbrook Hall, but it is possible that this may have originated as a homestead, rather than as a manor house. A 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed farmhouse survives within the moat<sup>9</sup>. The fifth moated site lies at Hyde Lea<sup>10</sup> and is associated with two fishponds, one of which lies in Drumble wood<sup>11</sup>. Field name and documentary evidence also suggests that the site was associated with a deer park and is therefore likely to represent the manor house of The Hyde which had been created by the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>. Archaeological excavation on the site suggested that the moat dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century.

How far the settlements and the arable open fields expanded and contracted over the period of the medieval period is not currently known. Further

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<sup>6</sup> Chapel of ease: A church built within the bounds of a parish for the attendance of those who cannot reach the parish church conveniently. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

<sup>7</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 01020 and 50031; English Heritage SM no. 21519

<sup>8</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00056 and PRN 00057; English Heritage SM no. 22435

<sup>9</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00799 and PRN 08153

<sup>10</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00791; English Heritage SM no. 21529

<sup>11</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00792

<sup>12</sup> Darlington & Jecock 2001: 16-19



evidence for open field agriculture at several places across the character area are ridge and furrow earthworks<sup>13</sup> which have been identified on aerial photographs, particularly to the south of Derrington and Billington and to the north of Hyde Lea. The open fields were often enclosed, within Staffordshire, from the late medieval period onwards by a means of piecemeal enclosure, which 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. Little piecemeal enclosure survives within the character area, except for an area around Ashflats on the lane between Stafford and Copenhall, where the characteristic pattern of reverse 'S' curve boundaries have survived. Larger areas of re-organised piecemeal enclosure exist around Littywood to the south west of the character area, to the east of Derrington, to the north west of Copenhall and north of Acton Trussell (see map 1). These field systems have been impacted by field boundary removal during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but which may retain some legibility of their origins as medieval open fields and later resulting piecemeal enclosure.

There are also areas across the landscape of the character area whose earliest origins have not yet been identified. These areas may prove to have also been former open fields, or they may have been woodland or unenclosed land where local people would have grazed animals. Moated sites, where they lie away from known settlements, such as those at Littywood, Stallbrook Hall and Hyde Lea, are often associated with assarting<sup>14</sup> during the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The placename Littywood is believed to mean 'little wood'<sup>15</sup> adding further weight to this hypothesis.

The seven settlements recorded in Domesday Book survive either as small hamlets, individual farmsteads or have been encompassed within the suburbs of Stafford. Within this settlement pattern there are 45 surviving historic farmsteads, 16 have been demolished during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is a wide range of plan types across the landscape and 57% of the farmsteads in the HECA are of the regular courtyard plan, which nationally are seen to date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>16</sup>. 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 the regular courtyard farmsteads are associated with listed buildings. Stallbrook Hall farm was built as a moderate sized farmstead possibly in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when a brick façade was added to the 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse<sup>17</sup>. Brookhouse Farm is associated with a 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse and barn, however, these have been subject to later additions and alterations

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<sup>13</sup> 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)

<sup>14</sup> Assarting: the creation of agricultural land through the clearance of woodland.

<sup>15</sup> Gelling, M 1981

<sup>16</sup> Lake 2009: 19

<sup>17</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 08153

some of which are likely to be associated with the development of this farmstead as a regular courtyard in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>18</sup>. The farmhouse at Billington Hall has been dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and it is likely that the surviving historic farm buildings were constructed at a similar period. This farm has expanded considerably during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, being testimony to the continuing importance of farming within the character area.

The remaining regular courtyard farmsteads have not been closely dated, although Brocton Park farm is associated with an 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century field pattern of planned enclosure. This surviving landscape was enclosed by surveyors using straight field boundaries and so creating fields with strong geometric patterns. It is therefore likely that Brock Park farm was a single phase farmstead which was constructed, or re-constructed, to farm the re-planned landscape around it.

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 19<sup>th</sup> century in date. The dispersed plans and the loose courtyard plans suggest incremental development over a number of years if not centuries. Seven farmsteads in the character area have been identified as being of a dispersed plan, with 12 being of a loose courtyard plan. Of the former only Acton Mill Farm is listed. The farmhouse has been dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and an associated barn, cow shed and cart shed date to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup>. However, this was the site of Acton Mill, although the mill itself had apparently been demolished by c.1900, and the farmhouse was constructed as the house to the mill. A watermill was recorded for the manor of Acton Trussell in Domesday Book and there are references to it throughout the medieval and post medieval period<sup>20</sup>. Two of the loose courtyard farmsteads are listed; Blue Cross Farm, in Derrington and The Toft, to the north of Levedale. The former dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but was originally constructed as a pair of timber framed cottages. The farmstead had probably developed at a later date, although the farm buildings were demolished to make way for housing in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The farmhouse at The Toft dates to c.1700 and the farmstead may date from this period although it may have earlier origins. The landscape around this farmstead has been considerably altered during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it has its origins as piecemeal enclosure, possibly of late medieval or post medieval date.

Much of the historic landscape character across the HECA has been impacted by change in some form during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see map 1). The southern suburbs of Stafford expanded into the character area to the north and north west during the inter war period and onwards. These suburbs mostly consist of housing development, but also areas of parkland and have encompassed the earlier settlements of Baswich, Rickerscote and Walton-on-the-Hill. Acton Trussell, Coppenhall and Derrington have also expanded during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of the 16 historic farmsteads which

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<sup>18</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 12967 and PRN 50346

<sup>19</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 09994 and PRN 09995

<sup>20</sup> Burne & Donaldson 1959: 14-15

were demolished during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 13 of them were lost to housing development at Stafford and Derrington.

Further change has occurred within the field systems themselves; the majority have been impacted by considerable field boundary removal during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to create large fields to improve agricultural productivity.

### **Designated Historic Environment Assets**

Four Scheduled Monuments (SM) lie within the character area, whilst a further SM, Stafford Castle, lies adjacent in HECA 14d. There are also 53 Listed Buildings and three conservation areas; the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal (073), Walton-on-the-Hill (059) and Burton Manor Village (162).

### **Historic Environment Considerations**

The number of prehistoric and Roman sites across and adjacent to this landscape suggests that there is the potential for further below ground archaeology to survive from these periods within the character area.

Consequently any future development with 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.
- 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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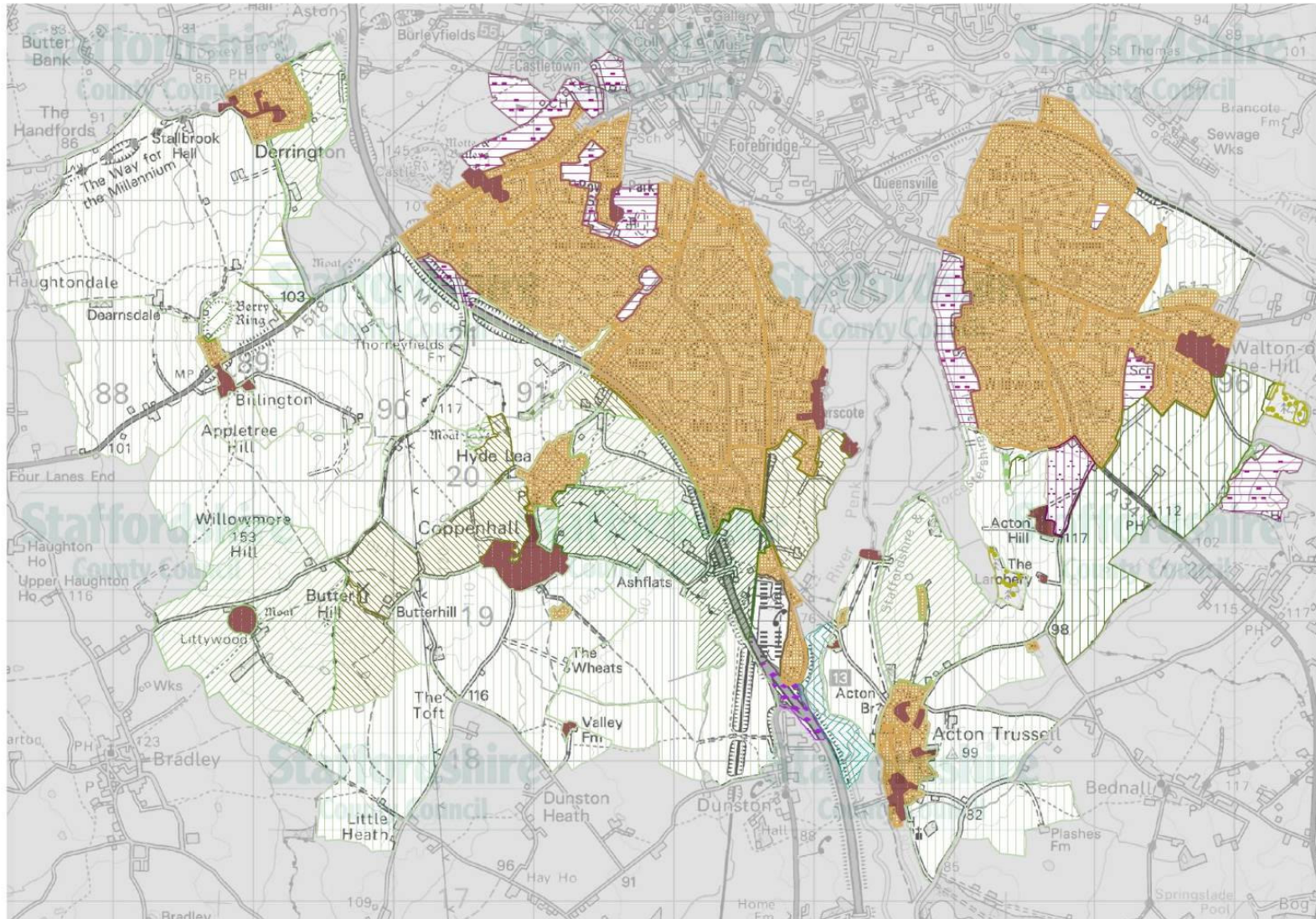
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Staffordshire Past Track: <http://www.staffspasttrack.org.uk/>



**Legend**

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



Map 1: Refined HLC

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## 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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Park<sup>21</sup>. A further two possible barrows were also noted within the park during the 1940s, although it is not known to what extent these survive<sup>22</sup>. Towards the western side of the character area at Pirehill the remains of a possible Bronze Age ring ditch<sup>23</sup> 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

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<sup>21</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00501; English Heritage SM No. 22425

<sup>22</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 01837

<sup>23</sup> 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)

markers. Their presence within the character area adds weight to the hypothesis that this landscape was open during the Bronze Age. An undated enclosure, possibly of prehistoric date, was identified on aerial photographs between Chebsey and Norton Bridge<sup>24</sup>.

Further evidence for Neolithic/Bronze Age activity has been found near Cold Norton farm where a collection of six stone tools<sup>25</sup> 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 alignment<sup>26</sup> 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 period<sup>27</sup>. To the south of Aston-by-Stone a rectilinear enclosure seen on aerial photographs has been interpreted as a possible Roman temporary camp<sup>28</sup>.

There is little tangible evidence for activity during the Saxon period, although a number of artefacts were recovered from Swynnerton Park which included 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century finds along with others of Roman and Medieval date<sup>29</sup>. 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 Chebsey<sup>30</sup>. 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

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<sup>24</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 03684

<sup>25</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 0069; PRN 02101; PRN 02102; PRN 02103; PRN 02104

<sup>26</sup> 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)

<sup>27</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 05067 and PRN 05068

<sup>28</sup> 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)

<sup>29</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 04102

<sup>30</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00097



was held by the Bishops of Lichfield and the church contains the tombs of four bishops<sup>31</sup>.

The listed buildings within the character area are mostly concentrated within the settlements. Eccleshall was established as a town in 1199<sup>32</sup> and there are fifty listed buildings within the historic core. The earliest of these is the Grade I Holy Trinity Church which has 13<sup>th</sup> century origins<sup>33</sup>. The earliest vernacular buildings have been dated from the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> century date<sup>34</sup>. A number of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed houses survive in the other historic settlements although the earliest known is a late 15<sup>th</sup>/early 16<sup>th</sup> century property in Yarnfield which originated as an open hall house<sup>35</sup>. During the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>36</sup>. 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 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses, but at Barnend in Pershall retains a 17<sup>th</sup> century barn within its plan<sup>37</sup>. 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 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 frame farmhouse whose origins pre-date the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>38</sup>. Five further loose courtyard farms associated with Listed buildings of 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date perhaps re-affirming the hypothesis of incremental development.

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<sup>31</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 07253

<sup>32</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 02348

<sup>33</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 07253

<sup>34</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00213; English Heritage SM no. 21525

<sup>35</sup> 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.

<sup>36</sup> Lake 2009: 19

<sup>37</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 14057, PRN 08107, PRN 07246 and PRN 07332

<sup>38</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 07242

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 period. Medieval arable open fields<sup>39</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> 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 earthworks<sup>40</sup>, 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 Marston<sup>41</sup>.

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 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>42</sup>. Fourteen of the historic farmsteads are closely associated with areas of piecemeal enclosure; one of these is Quaker Farm, which pre-dates the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, suggesting the re-planning of the

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<sup>39</sup> 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)

<sup>40</sup> 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)

<sup>41</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 04578, 04589, 20362, 20400, 20401 and MST 14319

<sup>42</sup> Yates 1974: 46 - 61

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 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.1725<sup>43</sup> and a landscape park was established to the south of it with its associated plantations. The famous 18<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century and this is the layout which largely survives<sup>44</sup>.

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 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most notable 20<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century planned enclosure, an 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> 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:

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<sup>43</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 07808

<sup>44</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 20744

- 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.
- 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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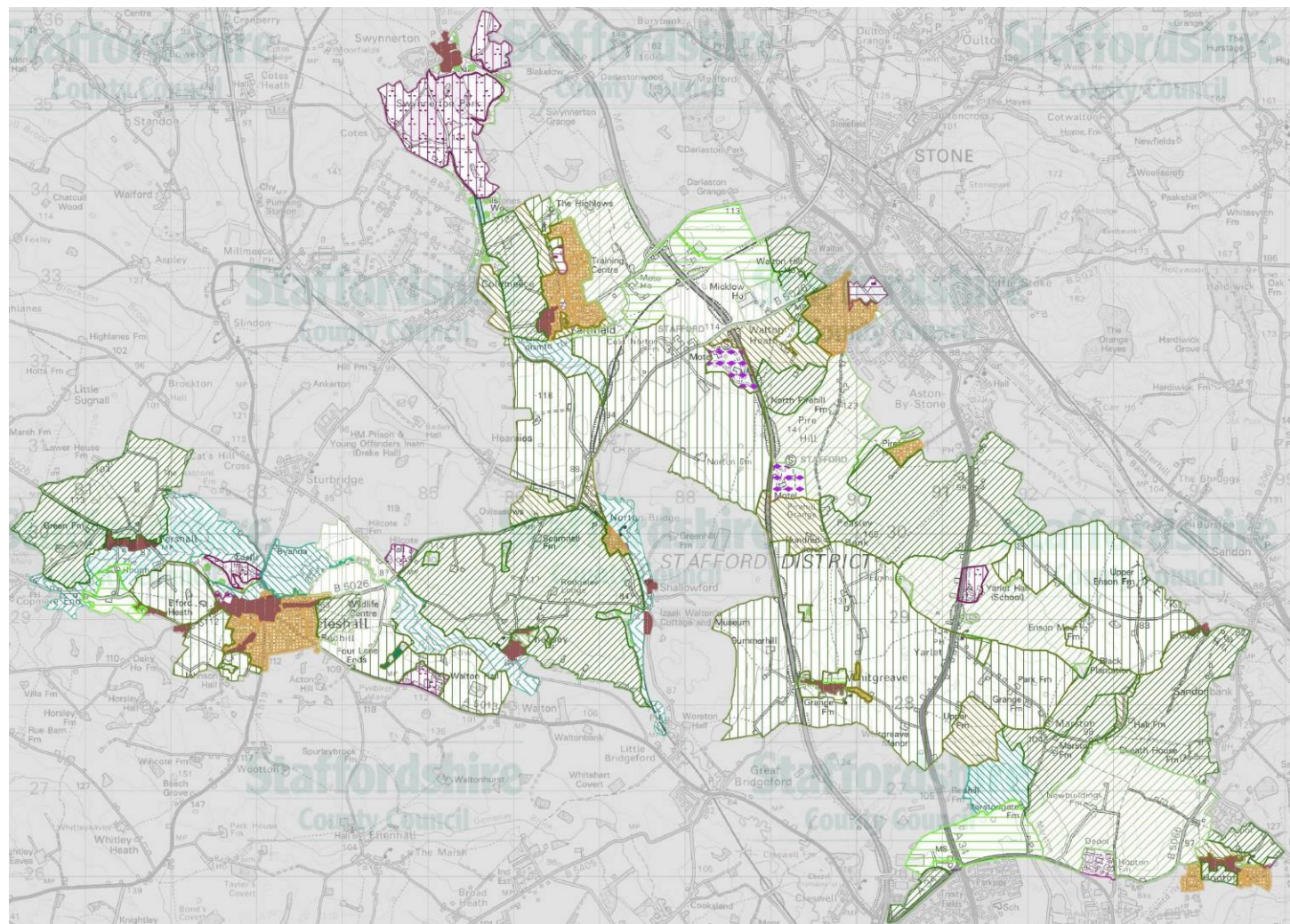
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**Legend**

-  18th/19th century planned field systems
-  18th/19th century semi planned field systems
-  Ancient Woodland
-  Communications
-  Early Irregular Enclosure
-  Early small rectilinear fields
-  Historic parks and gardens
-  Industrial & Extractive
-  Military
-  Miscellaneous Floodplain Fields
-  Other Recent Woodlands
-  Other early woodlands
-  Other parkland
-  Piecemeal Enclosure
-  Plantations
-  Post 1880s Re-organised fields
-  Post 1880s Settlement
-  Post 1880s small replanned field systems
-  Pre 1880s Settlement
-  Pre 1880s drained wetlands
-  Pre 1880s paddocks & closes
-  Re-organised piecemeal enclosure



Map 2: Refined HLC

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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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Ellenhall<sup>45</sup>. 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 Park<sup>46</sup> along with a further two possible barrows noted in the 1940<sup>47</sup>. At Pirehill a possible Bronze Age ring ditch<sup>48</sup> and a linear feature were identified on aerial photographs. Generally

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<sup>45</sup> 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).

<sup>46</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00501; English Heritage SM No. 22425

<sup>47</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 01837

<sup>48</sup> 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)

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 within the character area adds weight to the hypothesis that this landscape was open during the Bronze Age. An undated enclosure, possibly of prehistoric date, was identified on aerial photographs between Chebsey and Norton Bridge<sup>49</sup>.

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.

There is documentary and archaeological evidence for further medieval settlement within the character area. Worston, first mentioned in documentary sources in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, and Horseley, first recorded in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, were both probably larger in the medieval period than they are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>50</sup>. A moat survives at Oncote, which was probably present by the late 14<sup>th</sup> century when the site is first recorded in documents<sup>51</sup>. 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 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>52</sup>. 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 17<sup>th</sup> century, Seighford Hall<sup>53</sup>. Two further estates were established by the late 18<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century. Horseley Hall was established in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century, with parkland features surviving at Horseley Hall, including an ornamental lake, and at Seighford Hall where there are ornamental plantations<sup>54</sup>. A few parkland features also survive also at Johnson Hall<sup>55</sup>. Wilkes Wood is one of the few surviving features from the parkland at Cresswell and it continues to form the backdrop to the surviving stables of Cresswell Hall which have been converted to residential use<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 03684

<sup>50</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 02635 and PRN 02622

<sup>51</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00808

<sup>52</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00044; SM number 26

<sup>53</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 08143

<sup>54</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 40110, PRN 20043 and 40121

<sup>55</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 40107

<sup>56</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 40122



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 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are two major farmstead plan types across the landscape; 61% are of the regular courtyard plan, which nationally mostly date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>57</sup>. 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. 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 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Only one of the regular courtyard farmsteads is associated with listed buildings. The home farm of Seighford Hall includes a 17<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>58</sup>. 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> century, whilst Bridgeford Hall is a farmhouse of 17<sup>th</sup> century date. In both of these instances the farmsteads themselves have undergone considerable alteration during the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>59</sup>. The farmstead at Acton Hill Farm, where many of the farm buildings appear to survive, dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which may suggest some form of re-establishment of this farmstead<sup>60</sup>.

By the late medieval period much of the character area formed open fields<sup>61</sup>, 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.

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<sup>57</sup> Lake 2009: 19

<sup>58</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 08144 and PRN 08145

<sup>59</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 08151 and PRN 08150

<sup>60</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 07327

<sup>61</sup> 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 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 their origins may be closely associated with its spread across the character area.

The piecemeal enclosure has been re-organised particularly during 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century field boundary removal or through the establishment of a golf course are the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century planned fields, which were originally enclosed by surveyors using straight field boundaries and so creating fields with strong geometric patterns. Some 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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**

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.
- How development may impact upon the designated sites and their settings.

- It would need to assess the impacts upon above and below ground archaeology.

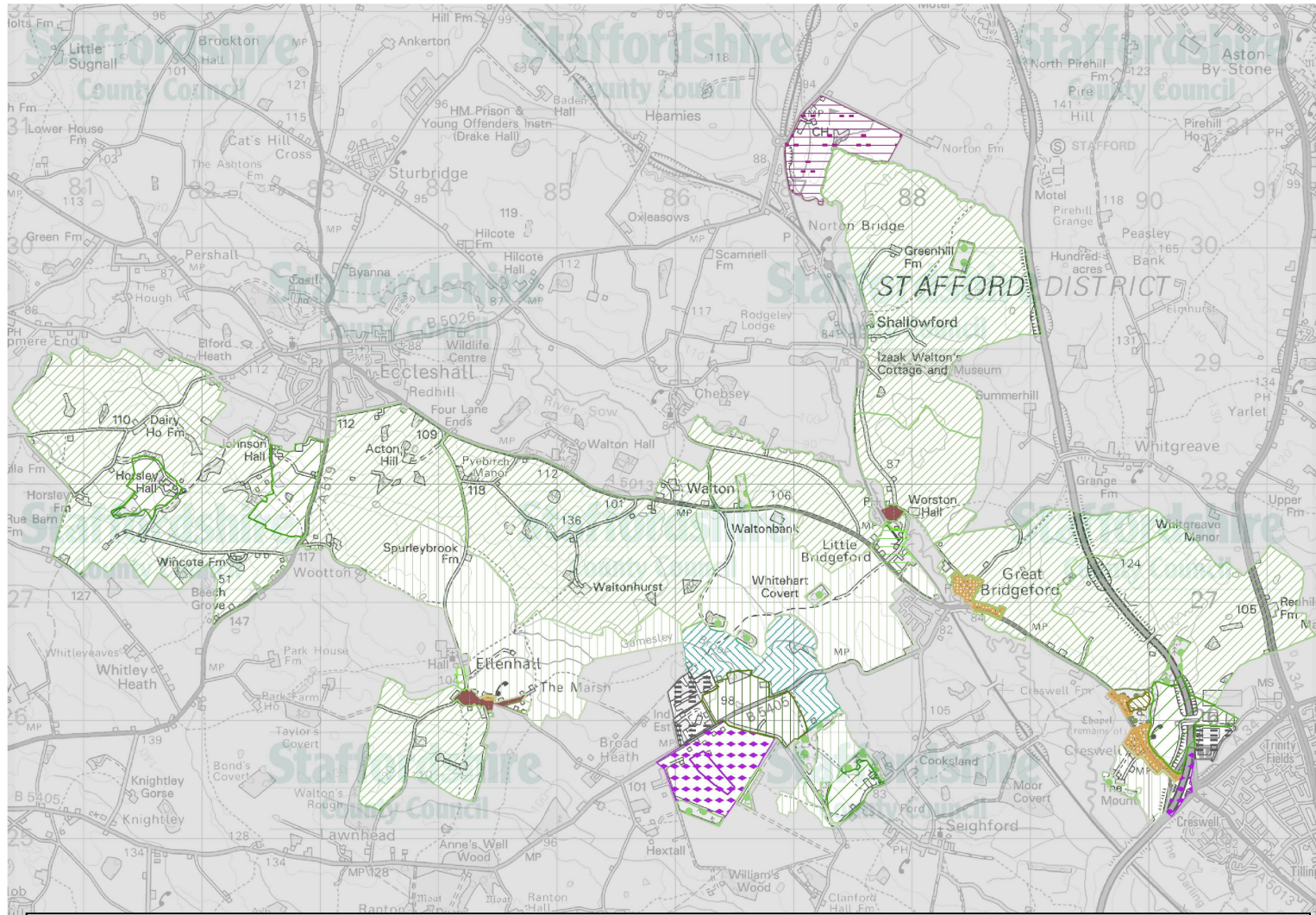
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**Legend**

-  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



Map 3: Refined HLC

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## Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 5i

### 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. The settlement pattern is dominated by villages and several historic farmsteads survive within the settlement of Brocton.

The character area covers 614ha and falls partly within Stafford Borough and partly within South Staffordshire.

#### *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 little evidence for human activity during the Neolithic and Bronze Age within the character area, except for a Neolithic axehead found near Bednall, however, this probably represents casual loss rather than firm evidence of intensive human activity.

In the wider area a Bronze Age barrow has been identified on Cannock Chase to the south west of Milford (see HECA 2d)<sup>62</sup>. To the south of the character area a possible Iron Age farmstead has been identified on aerial photographs and a multi-period site (see HECA 2g), with evidence from the Neolithic to a Roman villa has been excavated at Acton Trussell (HECA HECA 5b).

The settlements of Bednall and Brocton are recorded in Domesday Book (1086) and formed part of the manor of Baswich. At this date they are both described as being 'waste', however, this does not preclude settlement in the area. On the other hand these places may represent assarting known to have been carried out by the Bishops of Lichfield, who owned the manor of Baswich, in the area of Cannock Chase, during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A chapel of ease appears to have been established at Bednall in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, although the surviving church largely dates to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>63</sup>. Of the

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<sup>62</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00863

<sup>63</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 01145

thirteen listed buildings which lie within the character area eight lie within the two villages; those in Bednall relate to the church. In Brocton the four listed buildings are mostly timber framed houses dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century both settlements were still small hamlets, but Brocton in particular has expanded considerably during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Further 20<sup>th</sup> century housing has developed along the Cannock Road to the south of Brocton. The settlement of Milford, to the north of the character area, is first recorded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Scattered across the landscape are fourteen surviving historic farmsteads, ten of these lie within the historic settlements of Bednall and Brocton. Over half of these farms (57%) display a regular courtyard plan form, which nationally are seen to date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>64</sup>. 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. One of these farmsteads within the HECA is associated with a late 16<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, The Cottage in Brocton, although the farm buildings were demolished in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bednall Hall Farm was established by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a model farm, which are generally of a regular courtyard plan<sup>65</sup>. A regular courtyard farm survives in Milford, Home Farm, which was probably constructed to serve Milford Hall on the opposite side of the A34.

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 19<sup>th</sup> century in date. The dispersed plans and the loose courtyard plans suggest incremental development over a number of years if not centuries. Four farmsteads in the character area have been identified as being of a loose courtyard plan, with one being of a dispersed plan and one of a linear plan. Two of the farmsteads within Brocton, Village Farm with a loose-courtyard plan, and Black and White Cottage with attached threshing barn, a linear plan, both date to the late 16<sup>th</sup>/early 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>66</sup>. The farmsteads within the settlement appear to be early in date, possibly medieval in origin suggesting that Brocton developed as a cluster of farmsteads rather than as a planned village.

The historic landscape character suggests that medieval arable open fields<sup>67</sup> covered much of the character area. This pattern of arable agriculture, where two or more large fields were divided into individual strips whereby the local

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<sup>64</sup> Lake 2009: 19

<sup>65</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 51837; Model Farm: A farm building erected in the 18th and 19th century which were architect-designed rather than built in the local vernacular style. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

<sup>66</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 07961, PRN 07959 and PRN 50988

<sup>67</sup> 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)

people held scattered strips among them, may have originated as assarting in this area during the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>68</sup>.

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 preservation of the line the medieval plough in the field boundaries in the form of a reverse 'S' or as a dog-leg. Piecemeal enclosure occurred at different dates across the county, but had begun by the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>69</sup>. Large areas of piecemeal enclosure remain legible across the landscape of the HECA.

Two country houses with associated landscape parks were established within the character area during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Milford Hall, to the north of the character area, contains surviving features within its landscape park including a lake and woodland<sup>70</sup>. The only 20<sup>th</sup> century feature inserted into this landscape is a cricket ground. A dovecote, of probable 18<sup>th</sup> century date, lies to the south of Brocton Hall and was probably built as a landscape feature within the parkland. This is likely to be true of the remains of a medieval building which was probably deliberately re-erected here to form a folly<sup>71</sup>. Brocton Hall's landscape park was altered to a golf course, with the Hall forming the club house, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Overall, the historic landscape character of the area, although exhibiting a diversity of form and origins, survives well. 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 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is considerable 20<sup>th</sup> century housing around Brocton.

### **Designated Historic Environment Assets**

There are 13 Listed buildings lying within the character area. Walton-on-the-Hill Conservation Area lies adjacent to the north west.

### **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 villages of Bednall and Brocton. Several historic buildings survive in both settlements and there are two farmsteads of at least 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century origin within the latter.

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<sup>68</sup> Assarting: the creation of farmland through the clearance of woodland or forest.

<sup>69</sup> Yates 1974: 46 - 61

<sup>70</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 07941 and PRN 20738

<sup>71</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 07957 and PRN 07955



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

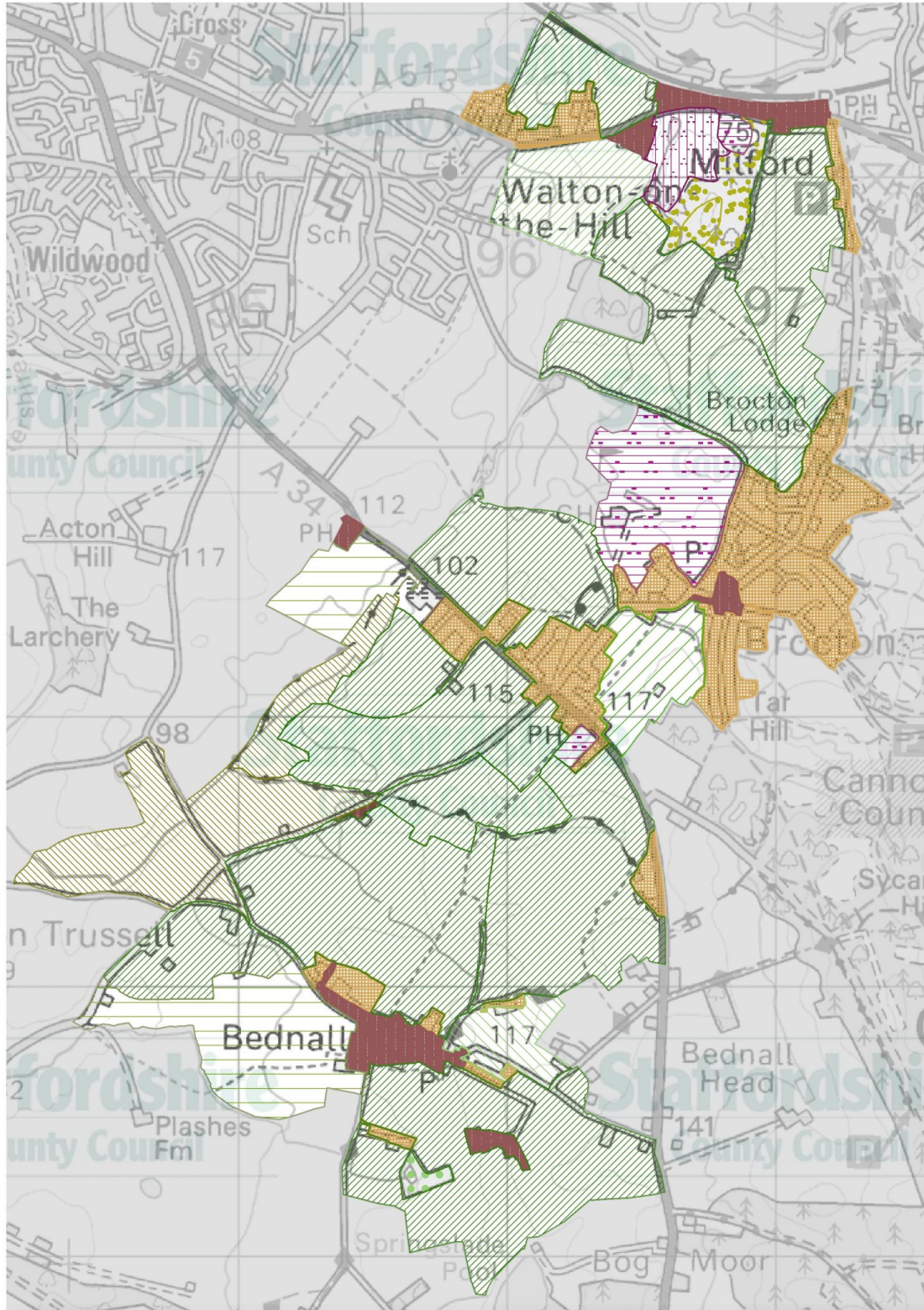
- Potential impact upon the surviving settlement pattern.
- 
- The impacts upon the farmsteads, particularly those with surviving historic buildings and those within the settlement cores.
- Potential impact upon the surviving historic character of the landscape and how this could be retained or reflected in any development.
- 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 semi planned field systems |  | Plantations                              |
|  | Early Irregular Enclosure                    |  | Post 1880s Settlement                    |
|  | Historic parks and gardens                   |  | Post 1880s small replanned field systems |
|  | Industrial & Extractive                      |  | Pre 1880s Settlement                     |
|  | Other Recent Woodlands                       |  | Pre 1880s paddocks & closes              |
|  | Other parkland                               |  | Re-organised piecemeal enclosure         |
|  | Piecemeal Enclosure                          |   |  |

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**Map 4: Refined HLC**

## Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 14a

### 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 character area is dominated by a historic landscape of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century origin comprised of planned field systems, plantations and farmsteads. The surviving settlement pattern is dispersed and includes the small village of Tixall. Two former landscape parks existed within the HECA although there overall character has been eroded by the expansion of agriculture during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ingestre Hall survives, but only the elaborate stables and gatehouse survive at Tixall Hall.

There is also strong evidence for earlier exploitation of the landscape from the Bronze Age onwards and the character area includes the Scheduled remains of St Thomas' Priory and the Registered Battlefield of Hopton Heath.

The character area covers 2,181ha and lies wholly within Stafford Borough.

#### *Archaeological and historic documentation*

Archaeological work within the character area has been considerable on particular sites including King's Low Barrow, Home Farm at Ingestre and the site of St Thomas' Priory. Across the wider character area there has been little archaeological or historic research and what is known is located 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 character area 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 the development of a small scale pastoral economy when humans were settling down to farm specific landscapes. There is considerable evidence for human activity dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods within the character area, which may have been attracted to the river valleys of the Sow to the south and the Trent to the east; their confluence lies just beyond the south eastern edge of the character area (in HECA 14c). In other parts of the Trent valley, within the county, human activity is known to have been intensive from the Neolithic period onwards.

Two Bronze Age burial mounds, King's Low and Queen's Low<sup>72</sup>, stand to the west of the HECA. These features were repositories for human cremations and were designed to have been seen across the landscape and in this context they may also have functioned as territorial boundary markers. An

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<sup>72</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00851 & PRN 0855



analysis of pollen samples taken from beneath King's Low confirms that this was an open landscape with scattered trees. Two further burial mounds are located within the HECA both having been identified on aerial photographs as ring ditch cropmarks<sup>73</sup>. The first lies approximately 1.5km to the north east of King's Low<sup>74</sup> and the other was located over 3.5km to the east<sup>75</sup>.

The open landscape, indicated by the pollen evidence from beneath King's Low, suggests that human activity was relatively intensive at this period whether through pastoral or arable farming. Archaeological work carried out towards the east of the character area, approximately 3.5km from King's Low, revealed evidence for Bronze Age ploughing activity<sup>76</sup>. Two pit alignments<sup>77</sup> were identified on aerial photographs, one in the area of the Bronze Age ploughing and the other just to the south in the vicinity of one of the probable Bronze Age burial mounds. These features probably represented a later phase of activity, possibly Iron Age or Roman in origin.

The earliest evidence for human activity within the character area, however, comes from flint artefacts which date to the Mesolithic or early Neolithic period<sup>78</sup>. This evidence probably represents the presence of mobile hunting groups and transitory occupation.

There is currently little evidence for Anglo-Saxon activity within the HECA, other than the two places recorded in Domesday Book (1086) at Ingestre and Tixall. These two entries suggest that just prior to the Norman Conquest (1066) there were some areas of arable agriculture probably towards the south, near Tixall, and to the east, at Ingestre and it is likely that this pattern had been present earlier in the Anglo-Saxon period. At Ingestre the cultivated land appears to have been located in a similar area to the arable agriculture identified as being of Bronze Age date. Woodland is also recorded in Domesday for the Tixall and Ingestre entries and it is possible that this may have lain more centrally within the HECA in the areas which were not divided into farmland until the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Scheduled Augustinian priory of St Thomas, on the southern edge of the character area, was established in c.1174. The priory site is associated with a former mill and fishponds, one with a surviving medieval culvert, all forming part of this monastic complex. The priory was never large in terms of a

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<sup>73</sup> Cropmark: Monument visible as a mark in standing crops, as parchmarks or as soil marks, but where no sub-surface deposits have been proven e.g. by archaeological excavation or other disturbance (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

<sup>74</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 04619

<sup>75</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 04602

<sup>76</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 04615

<sup>77</sup> 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)

<sup>78</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 05063

national context, but it was valued as the wealthiest monastic site in Staffordshire at the time of its dissolution in 1538<sup>79</sup>.

The medieval landscape of the HECA was dominated by two large areas of Unenclosed Land; Hopton Heath and Salt Heath to the north and the larger Tixall Heath towards the south west, which may have been created following human activity from the Bronze Age period onwards. This landscape would have provided opportunities for pasturing animals and providing fuel for domestic and small scale industrial activities. Hopton Heath still existed as an area of open land at the time of the Civil War when a battle between the Parliamentary forces and the Royalists took place (1643)<sup>80</sup>. Ingestre Hall<sup>81</sup> dates to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and it has been argued that the walls enclosing Ingestre Park formed one of the boundaries of the battlefield<sup>82</sup>. The boundary of Ingestre Park at this date is likely to have enclosed a deer park<sup>83</sup>, which may have had its origins in the medieval period, as indicated by the surviving name of Deer Park Farm.

The heathlands were enclosed during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. An Act of Parliament was passed in 1749 to enclose Tixall Heath and in 1775, as indicated by Yates' county map, only an area known as St Thomas' Heath survived in the southern part of the character area. An Act of Parliament to enclose Salt Heath, located to the north of Hopton Heath, was passed in 1845. The landscapes that resulted from these enclosures are the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century planned fields which still dominate the historic character of the landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This landscape was enclosed by surveyors using straight field boundaries and so creating fields and road systems with strong geometric patterns. There are no corresponding Acts enclosing Hopton Heath or St Thomas's Heath, but this like much of the remaining landscape was clearly designed in the same manner and probably indicates the presence of a wealthy and dominant landowning class in the area. Ingestre Park, which survives to the east of the HECA, was associated with the Earls of Shrewsbury from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and Tixall Hall was the home of the Clifford family at a similar date. Other large country estates are to be found along the Trent Valley whose influence may also have extended into this character area.

Also associated with the great re-planning of this landscape in the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century are the many Plantations which are scattered across the HECA. Some are quite discrete and many of them represent fox coverts planted to facilitate fox hunting which became increasingly organised during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>84</sup>. Eight surviving historic farmsteads have been characterised as being of regular courtyard plan which nationally are seen to date from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. These farms are closely associated with the planned fields and

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<sup>79</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00124

<sup>80</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00753

<sup>81</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 08099

<sup>82</sup> English Heritage nd.

<sup>83</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 02022

<sup>84</sup> Johnson 1967: 359

were an essential part of the process of industrialising agriculture during this period to improve productivity and efficiency.

In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century the famous gardener, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was engaged to landscape Ingestre's parkland<sup>85</sup> although little now survives of his work from this period. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century this area is characterised by Post 1880s Re-organised Fields although some of the trees comprising several 18<sup>th</sup> century Avenues survive as do some of the smaller gardens nearer the hall.

Capability Brown's name has also been associated with the landscape park that once existed at Tixall Hall, however, it has never been proven that he carried out any work there. Tixall Hall had been rebuilt in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century and the surviving listed gatehouse<sup>86</sup> was constructed by the end of that century. Mary Queen of Scot's was held here in 1586<sup>87</sup>. A deer park was probably associated with the hall by this date, which like at Ingestre, may have had its origins in the medieval period. Tixall Hall was rebuilt again in 1785, but was demolished in 1926. The elaborate listed stable block, dated to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, survives and has been converted into domestic dwellings<sup>88</sup>.

The settlement pattern of the character area is predominantly dispersed with scatterings of cottages and farms. The origins of Tixall village similarly displays an overall dispersed grouping of properties and has seen minimal development during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are 22 surviving historic farmsteads scattered across the HECA; eight of these have been discussed above. The characteristics of the remaining 14 farmsteads suggest that they developed over a longer period of time and their origins may pre date the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. Two are small farmsteads of a linear plan which lie to the north west of the character area on the edge of the former Salt Heath. Their location here suggests that they may have developed as squatter enclosures on the heathland prior to its enclosure in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The majority of the remaining farmsteads were developed as larger farms although many have been altered and extended during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite this there is the potential for historic farm buildings to survive across this landscape.

The largest feature of 20<sup>th</sup> century date within the character area is golf course located to the south of Ingestre Hall. However, the historic character of the former landscape parks at Ingestre and Tixall has been largely lost to agriculture. RAF Stafford has been developed over part of the former Hopton Heath.

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<sup>85</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 20737

<sup>86</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00028

<sup>87</sup> Staffordshire Past Track: Donor ref SAMS Acc no., G94.332a, img: 1514 (18/1968)

<sup>88</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 08168

## Designated Historic Environment Assets

There is one Scheduled Monument within the Character Area and the Registered Hopton Battlefield. There are also 22 Listed Buildings and two Conservation Areas; Tixall (082) and Ingestre (030).

## Historic Environment Considerations

The number of prehistoric sites across this landscape suggests that there is the potential for further below ground archaeology to survive from these periods within the character area.

There is strong surviving evidence of the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century origins of the character area with surviving field patterns, plantations and associated farmsteads. The historic dispersed settlement pattern also survives across the HECA, which includes the small village of Tixall. There has been loss of historic character associated with the former landscape parks of Ingestre and Tixall.

Consequently any future development with 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, which may retain 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.
- How development may impact upon the setting of designated sites.
- It would need to assess the impacts upon above and below ground archaeology.

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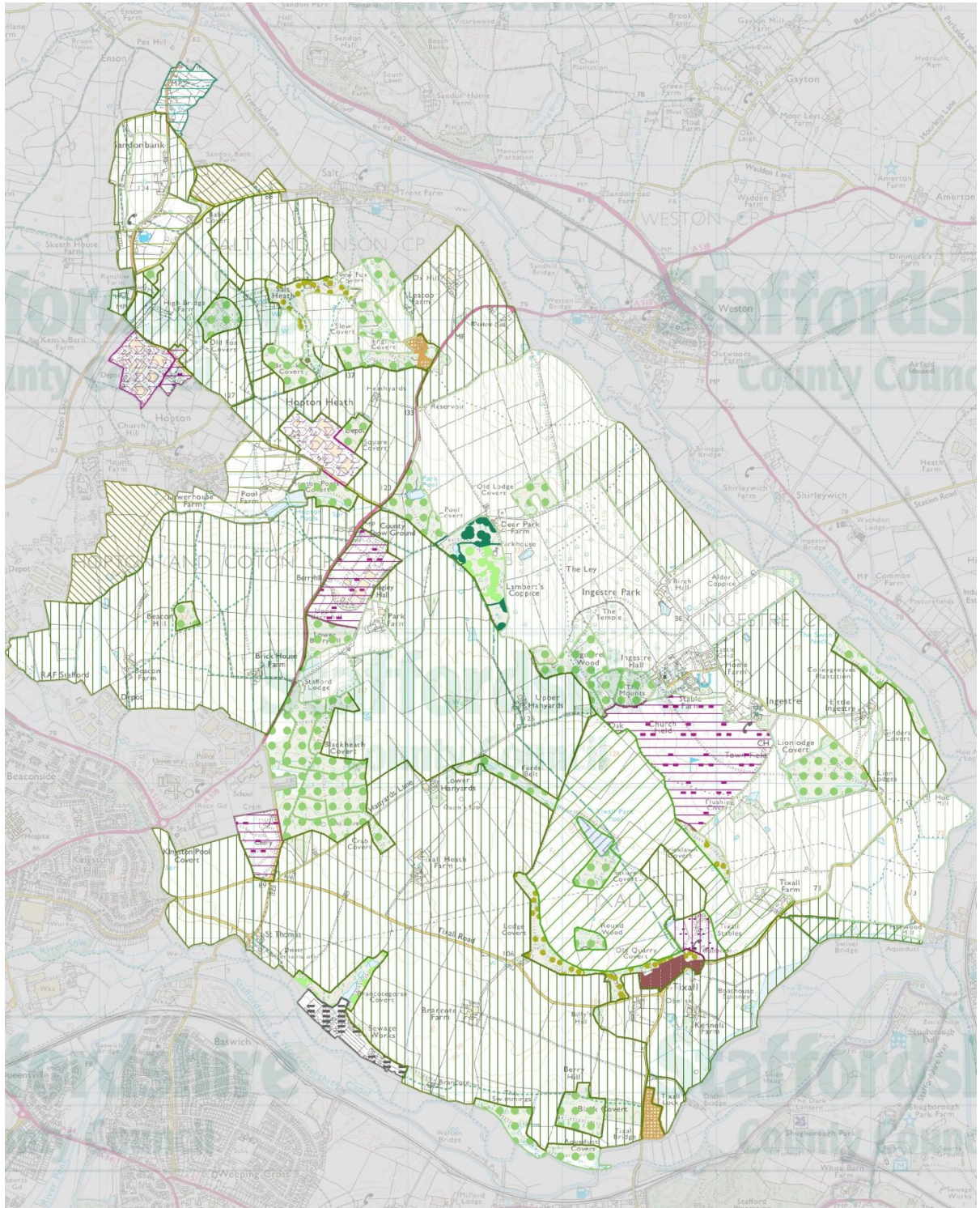
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**Legend**

-  18th/19th century planned field systems
-  18th/19th century semi planned field systems
-  Ancient Woodland
-  Artificial water bodies
-  Early Irregular Enclosure
-  Historic parks and gardens
-  Industrial & Extractive
-  Military
-  Other Recent Woodlands
-  Other early woodlands
-  Other parkland
-  Plantations
-  Post 1880s Re-organised fields
-  Post 1880s Settlement
-  Post 1880s small replanned field systems
-  Pre 1880s Settlement
-  Recent replanted ancient woodland
-  Squatter Enclosure

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**Map 5: Refined HLC**

## Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 14b

### 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 character area includes the historic core of the county town, Stafford and most of its later suburbs. The Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) for Stafford covers in detail the historic environment of this character area. There are many listed buildings, some of medieval origin, and the historic street pattern within the town centre survives. The suburbs developed, initially in the medieval period to the north and south of the town, but expanded considerably from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

The character area covers 1,164ha and lies wholly within Stafford Borough.

#### *Archaeological and historic documentation*

Substantial archaeological work has been carried out within the historic core of Stafford. The town is also covered by a volume of the Victoria County Histories for Staffordshire. Information is held on the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by Staffordshire County Council.

### Historic Environment Assets Summary

Environmental data from the former medieval King's Pool which lay to the north east of the town centre and from a development site on Lammascote Road (see HUCA 14c) suggests that the landscape of the character area had mostly been heavily wooded with tantalizing evidence for burning within the woodland during the Mesolithic period<sup>89</sup>. The woodland began to be cleared during the Neolithic period intensifying from the mid-late Bronze Age onwards. The landscape was probably cleared to support a small-scale mixed farming system of arable and pasture. Evidence for Iron Age agricultural activity in the area was confirmed by an archaeological excavation to the north of St Mary's Church in the town where two or three probable granaries were recorded<sup>90</sup>.

Other prehistoric evidence from the character area includes 44 flint tools found at Cottonfields, there is some question over the date of these tools, but they probably represent a flint working site<sup>91</sup>. A flint scraper<sup>92</sup> from Kingston Hill, probably represents casual loss and does not add to our understanding of the activities being carried out during the prehistoric period within the character area.

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<sup>89</sup> Bartley & Morgan 1990: 188-189; Greig 2007: 43

<sup>90</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 01613

<sup>91</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 02107

<sup>92</sup> Scraper: A flake or blade with retouch along one or more edges. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009).



The main north-south route through the town centre, represented by Gaolgate/Greengate Street, has been suggested as the line of a Roman road, which represented an important crossing of the River Sow<sup>93</sup>. However, this has not been proven archaeologically. There is little evidence for Roman activity within the character area other than pottery recovered from excavations in Clarke Street and Tipping Street, a whole pot from Market Square and two coins, one from Forebridge and the other from Cambridge Street<sup>94</sup>.

There is, however, substantial archaeological and historic evidence for activity from the Saxon period, particularly within the town centre. A burh<sup>95</sup> was established at Stafford in AD913 by Athelflaed, Lady of the Mercians and the sister of King Edward the elder. Potential archaeological evidence for the Burh has been revealed on the northern side of South Walls where a large ditch may represent part of the defences and a road surface found in Gaolgate Street may represent the military road which followed the line of the burh defences<sup>96</sup>. The street pattern of the historic core may have its origins in the Saxon period, but would have been largely established by the medieval period.

Saxon pottery kilns, possible ovens and wells have also been archaeologically excavated on various sites within the historic core and many archaeological sites have produced residual Saxon pottery. Furthermore a potential early ecclesiastical site may have developed around St Bertelin's church during the early medieval period as excavations on the site of the chapel have indicated<sup>97</sup>.

The archaeological evidence for medieval activity is also considerable across the town. A castle was established, probably at Broadeye, following the Norman Conquest (1066), which may have survived in some form into the 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>98</sup>. A ditch, interpreted as forming part of the enclosure of the outer bailey to the castle, has been excavated in the area of Broadeye<sup>99</sup>. Two suburbs developed to the north, Foregate, and to the south, Forebridge probably during the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

St Chad's Church dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and St Mary's Church dates to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>100</sup>. Other buildings with known medieval origins within the town include four 15<sup>th</sup> century buildings along Gaolgate/Greengate Street and a further 15<sup>th</sup> century property on Church Street. Other historic buildings of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century appearance may prove to retain earlier fabric within their structures.

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<sup>93</sup> Stafford Borough Council 1999: 2

<sup>94</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 02196 and PRN 52418

<sup>95</sup> Burh: An Anglo-Saxon fortified town or other defended site, not necessarily urban. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

<sup>96</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 05519 and PRN 52497

<sup>97</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00774

<sup>98</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00766

<sup>99</sup> Staffordshire HER: MST 14311

<sup>100</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00775 and PRN 08340

The historic core of Stafford contains the majority of the Listed Buildings within the character area and is also covered by a Conservation Area, as are the earlier suburbs of Forebridge and Foregate. The Grade II Listed buildings of St George's Hospital, to the east of the town centre, and the Stafford Prison to the north also form the basis of a further Conservation Area. These buildings date to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and form part of a wider expansion of the town during these periods. The suburban expansion of Stafford was linked, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, with the development of the shoe industry and later the engineering industries. The suburbs developed over land which had formed part of the medieval arable open fields<sup>101</sup> belonging to the town and the neighbouring manors of Forebridge and Marston.

### **Designated Historic Environment Assets**

There are 116 Listed Buildings and four Conservation Areas, Stafford (036), St George's Hospital (092), Foregate Street (137) and Forebridge (141) lie within the character area. East Gate Scheduled Monument also lies within the zone.

### **Historic Environment Considerations**

The number of prehistoric sites across this landscape suggests that there is the potential for further below ground archaeology to survive from these periods within the character area.

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

- Potential impact upon archaeological deposits within the historic core
- Potential impact upon the historic street pattern within the town which has its origins in at least the medieval period.
- How development may impact upon the setting of designated sites.

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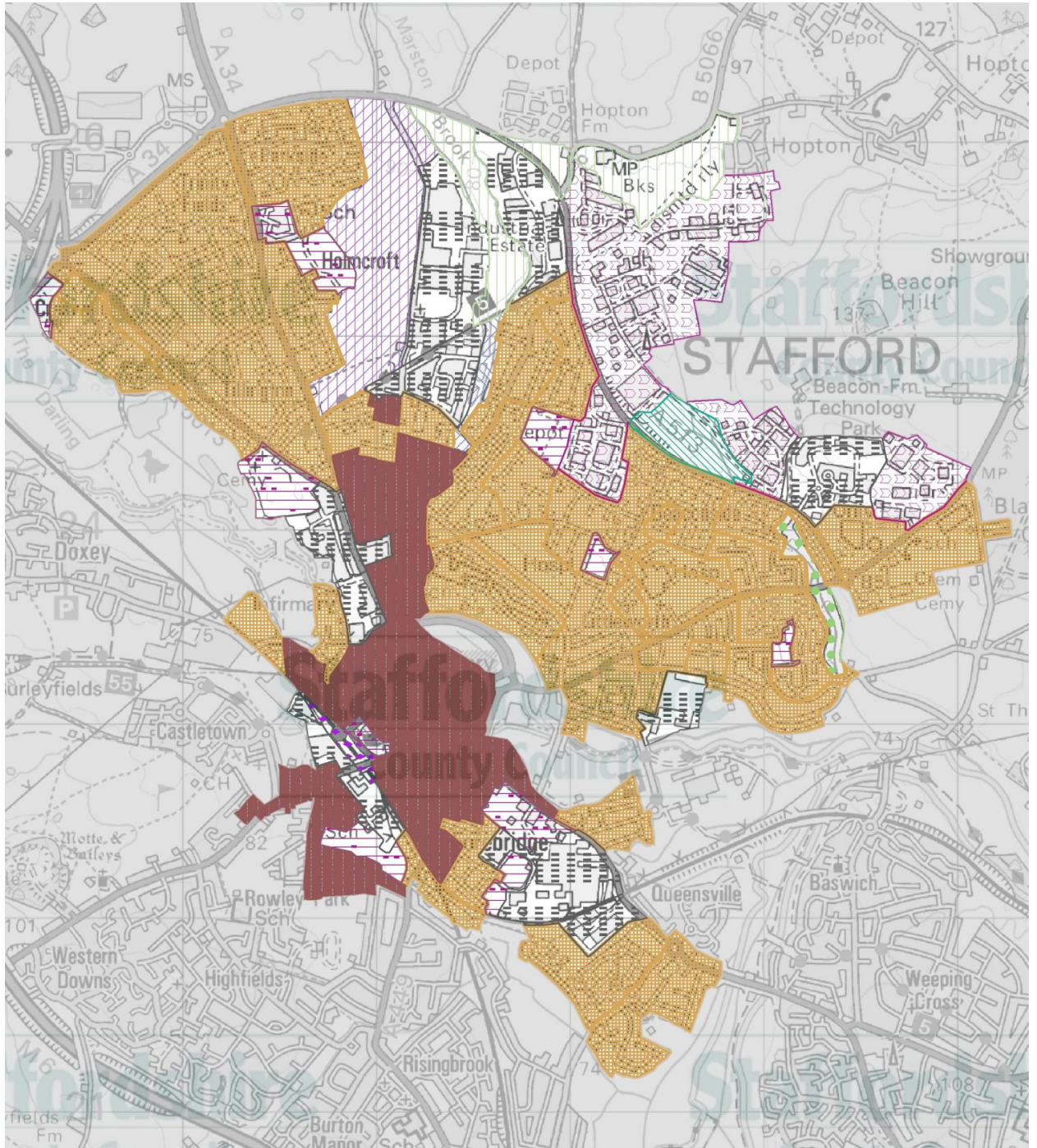
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<sup>101</sup> Open Field: An area of arable land with common rights after harvest or while fallow. Usually without internal divisions (hedges, walls or fences). (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)












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**Legend**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Artificial water bodies |  Plantations                    |
|  Communications          |  Post 1880s Re-organised fields |
|  Early Unenclosed Land   |  Post 1880s Settlement          |
|  Industrial & Extractive |  Pre 1880s Settlement           |
|  Military                |  Pre 1880s drained wetlands     |
|  Other parkland          |  |

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Map 6: Refined HLC

## Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 14c

### Introduction

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

The character area is dominated by the river valleys of the Sow and Penk whose confluence lies just to the north of Baswich Business Park. The HECA follows the course of the River Sow eastwards to its confluence with the River Trent. There are several historic bridges associated with the river system some of which are listed. Surviving 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century watermeadows line the whole of the character area.

The late 18<sup>th</sup> century Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, designated as a conservation area, also bisects the character area and again several historic structures, including an aqueduct, are associated with it.

There is a high potential for unrecorded archaeological deposits to survive beneath the alluvium in the river valley.

The character area covers 578ha. The majority of the character area lies within Stafford Borough, but a portion to the south lies in South Staffordshire.

#### *Archaeological and historic documentation*

A few archaeological interventions have been recorded to the west of the zone where development has been carried out associated with Stafford. Otherwise there has been little archaeological or historic research carried out within the zone and what is known is located 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 character area 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. Considerable evidence for human activity dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age period lies adjacent within HECA 14, which may have been attracted to the river valleys of the Penk and the Sow. The confluence of these two rivers lies near the site of St Thomas' Priory, whilst the Sow's confluence with the Trent lies to the far east of the HECA. In other parts of the Trent valley, within the county, human activity is known to have been intensive from the Neolithic period onwards. However, evidence for prehistoric activity within the zone relates to a pit alignment identified on aerial photographs taken in 1975<sup>102</sup>. It is considered that the lack of data for activity

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<sup>102</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 04608

within the zone between the prehistoric and Saxon period is likely to be due to the area having not been closely studied. There is a strong potential for unknown archaeological deposits to survive beneath the alluvium within the character area.

There is little evidence for settlement within the zone across all historic periods with the exception the late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing development at Queensville, part of Stafford's eastern suburbs.

The 12<sup>th</sup> century Scheduled Augustinian priory of St Thomas, lies just beyond the northern boundary of the character area (with HECA 14a). An enclosure and a possible building lie within the HECA, which may relate to medieval activity associated with the priory<sup>103</sup>.

The character area is likely to have been utilised as meadow land during the medieval period or was otherwise left as floodplain marshes until the late 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century when the landscape was drained and watermeadows were established. 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. The watermeadows extend all along the character area and are well preserved with surviving upstanding earthworks and other structures such as bridges and sluices. The expense and commitment to running the watermeadows meant that they were mostly established by wealthy landowners. It is possible that some of these watermeadows were established by the Earls of Lichfield whose family seat is Shugborough. A small area of the Grade I Shugborough Registered Park and the Conservation Area, lie within the HECA.

Rivers provided a valuable resource but were also obstacles which needed to be crossed. Essex Bridge, a Scheduled Monument, crosses the River Trent just to the south of its confluence with the River Sow<sup>104</sup>. The bridge probably dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is believed to have replaced earlier timber bridges. St Thomas' bridge spans the River Sow further to the west and it is believed to have 14<sup>th</sup> century origins. A further two Grade II listed bridges carrying roads across the River Sow and Penk are also found within the HECA.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal was constructed following the river valleys<sup>105</sup>. It was designed by the engineer James Brindley and opened in 1772. Eight bridges cross the canal within the character area and an aqueduct carries the canal over River Sow to the north of Milford<sup>106</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 03759

<sup>104</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00038; English Heritage SM No. 19

<sup>105</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 05173

<sup>106</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRNs 02798 to 02804 and PRN 02874



## **Designated Historic Environment Assets**

There are three Scheduled Monument lying within the Character Area with a further Scheduled Monument, St Thomas' Priory, lying adjacent to the north. Shugborough Registered Park and Garden lies to the east. There are also eight Listed Buildings and two Conservation Areas; the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal (073) and part of Great Haywood and Shugborough (007).

## **Historic Environment Considerations**

The character area is dominated by the river valleys of the Penk and Sow and follows the latter eastwards to its confluence with the River Trent to the west of Great Haywood. River valleys have attracted humans since the prehistoric period and it is likely that unknown archaeological deposits survive beneath the alluvium. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the river valleys had attracted the development of watermeadows and the canal.

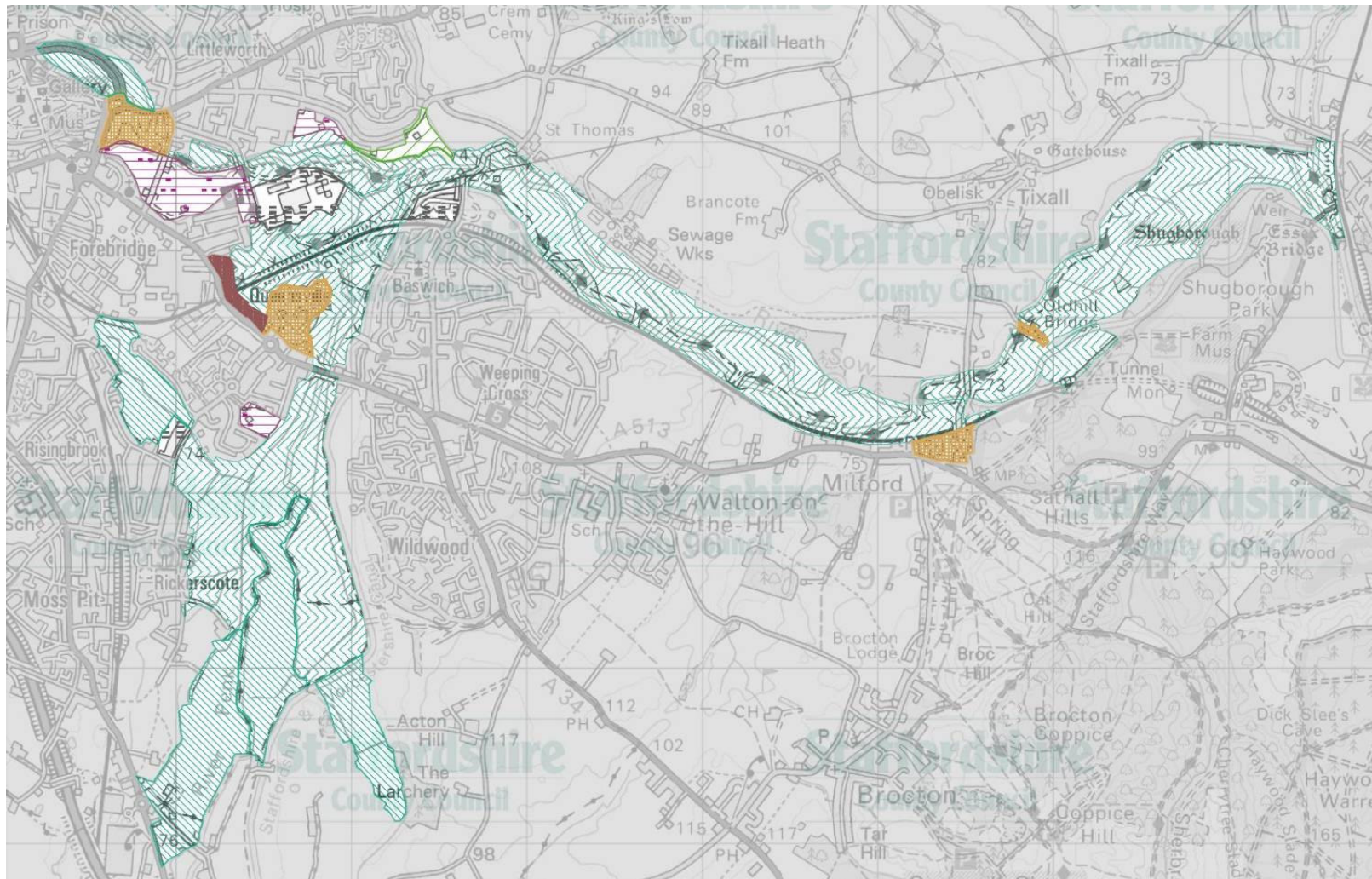
Consequently any future development with the character area would need to consider the following issues:

- Potential impact upon the surviving watermeadow system and the associated historic landscape character.
- How development may impact upon the setting of designated sites and their associated structures.
- It would need to assess the impacts upon above and below ground archaeology.



**Legend**

-  Industrial & Extractive
-  Miscellaneous Floodplain Fields
-  Other parkland
-  Post 1880s Settlement
-  Post 1880s small replanned field systems
-  Pre 1880s Settlement
-  Pre 1880s drained wetlands



Map 7: Refined HLC

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## Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 14d

### 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 character area is defined by the River Sow where 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century watermeadows survive along its length. The surviving field systems have largely been impacted by the removal of field boundaries during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those fields to the south of Doxey and the north of the Scheduled Stafford Castle and its associated village had probably formed part of three deer parks during the medieval period being closely associated with the development of the castle. A Scheduled moated site may represent the site of a lodge within one of the deer parks. Three historic farmsteads survive within the character area, Cresswell Farm to the north is probably associated with the development of the watermeadows. Two Listed buildings survive within Doxey, whilst the remaining houses are of 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

There is a high potential for unrecorded archaeological deposits to survive beneath the alluvium in the river valley.

The character area covers 684ha and lies wholly within Stafford Borough.

#### *Archaeological and historic documentation*

Archaeological and historic research within the character area has concentrated upon Stafford Castle, including an evaluation of the fields to the north in advance of an extension to a golf course. Across the remainder of the character area there little work has been carried out and what is known held on the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by Staffordshire County Council.

### Historic Environment Assets Summary

Little is currently known about the prehistoric period within the zone. The evidence for activity during this period is limited to a Neolithic or Bronze Age stone implement found near Cresswell in 1905<sup>107</sup>. However environmental evidence from Stafford (see HECA 14b) suggests that woodland had predominated until the Neolithic period when some small scale clearance appears. However there was an intensification of woodland clearance for farming during the Bronze and Iron Ages, which probably resulted in a reasonably open landscape of pasture and arable. There would also have been areas of wetland being potentially exploited for fishing and meadows along the Sow Valley and its tributaries. Evidence from the Trent Valley in east Staffordshire suggests increasing human activity from the Neolithic period onwards. Further evidence for Iron Age activity is the Scheduled Bury

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<sup>107</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 01652

Ring hillfort, which is situated in an elevated position to the south west of the character area (in HECA 5b). The presence of the hillfort implies that 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. The hillfort would have provided a cultural, economic and administrative focus for communities in the surrounding landscape.

The hypothesized Iron Age settlement pattern is likely to have continued into the Roman period. Tangible evidence for occupation during the Roman period has been identified to the west of the zone near Hill Farm, which is situated less than 1km to the north west of Stafford Castle, in the form of a large scattering of pottery sherds probably representing the site of a farmstead<sup>108</sup>. Pits, gullies and a number of postholes identified in an archaeological evaluation may suggest industrial activities associated with the site.

Evidence for human activity for the Saxon period comes from Domesday Book (1086) where Doxey and Cresswell are both recorded, which suggests some small scale settlement since at least the late Saxon period. This may suggest that the landscape has been continuously settled to greater or lesser degrees from the late Bronze Age/Iron Age onwards. The placename Doxey may pre date the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century further suggesting the possibility of human activity here during in the Saxon period. The historic core of the settlement lies mostly to the south of the Doxey Road and two listed historic buildings, of probable 17<sup>th</sup> century date, survive. By the inter war period housing had begun to be developed along the Doxey Road and the settlement continued to expand during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, acting as a dormitory village for Stafford. Cresswell, on the other hand, does not survive as a village or hamlet, but the Scheduled remains of a 13<sup>th</sup> century church still stand on the higher land above the River Sow<sup>109</sup>. The church had been abandoned by 1633 and it is possible that any settlement had become virtually deserted prior to this date, although it was recorded as having between 10 and 13 taxpayers in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The earthworks surrounding the church are likely to be the remains of small scale quarrying rather than evidence of former settlement.

The entries for Doxey and Cresswell in Domesday Book both refer specifically to meadows, with a watermill belonging to the latter manor. These entries confirm the prominent place the river and the lands adjacent to it held in the local economy. The importance of the river valley in the local economy continued throughout the medieval and post medieval period. During the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century a programme of agricultural improvements led to the intensive drainage along the River Sow. Drainage within the zone enabled the construction of water meadows, which still dominate the historic character of the zone. 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

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<sup>108</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 04156

<sup>109</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 00044; SM no. 26



over-winter larger numbers of animals. The upstanding earthworks relating to the watermeadows survive over much of this area. Within Doxey Marshes Nature Reserve the watermeadow features survive submerged beneath the water and undergrowth<sup>110</sup>. Three small structures were located within the watermeadow system at Doxey Marshes by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, two of them have since been lost and one survives in ruins. It is likely that they were associated with the system of watermeadows, possibly providing storage or shelter.

Part of this extensive watermeadow network near Cresswell Farm survives in good condition with upstanding earthworks including water-filled drains and other associated structures. The Staffordshire blue-brick bridges and culverts suggest that the watermeadow was maintained during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. To the immediate east of the farmstead there are the possible remains of ridge and furrow earthworks which may have been adapted to form part of the watermeadow system at a later date.

The watermeadow at Cresswell Farm may be closely associated with the development of the historic farmstead itself which demonstrates a regular courtyard plan, suggesting it was constructed in a single phase. This plan form has been identified nationally as post dating the 1790s<sup>111</sup> and is the most common form in Staffordshire. The regular courtyard farms appear to represent a deliberate development aimed at improving agricultural productivity being taken forward by wealthy landowners from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which follows the same philosophy behind the development of the watermeadows. Many of the historic farm buildings survive although one modern shed has replaced part of the complex and overall the farm has expanded during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The watermill in the Doxey Domesday entry also implies that there was sufficient arable agriculture in the area to warrant a manor mill to grind corn. Ridge and furrow earthworks<sup>112</sup> have been identified on aerial photographs to the north near Cresswell, to the north west of Doxey and during field investigations in the fields to the north of Stafford Castle. Ridge and furrow earthworks are often, but not exclusively, the surviving evidence for medieval arable open fields which were farmed collectively by local people, probably living at Cresswell, Doxey and Aston, which lies just to the west of the character area (in HECA 5c). The open fields were often enclosed, within Staffordshire, from the late medieval period onwards by a means of piecemeal enclosure, which 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 preservation of the line

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<sup>110</sup> Staffordshire HER: PRN 52112, PRN 52113, PRN 52114

<sup>111</sup> Lake 2009: 19

<sup>112</sup> 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)



the medieval plough in the field boundaries in the form of a reverse 'S' or as a dog-leg.

Stafford Castle and the associated settlement of Monteville, designated a Scheduled Monument, were probably established in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>113</sup>. It appears that the castle's fortunes declined over the course of the following 150 years until the first Earl of Stafford began a re-building programme in 1348.

Three deer parks were associated with the castle, Great Park, Little Park and Hyde Park. It is not certain at what date the parks were established, but they were all present by the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>114</sup>. At their greatest extent Great Park and Little Park probably covered much of the area of this zone. However, the ridge and furrow earthworks identified across large areas of the field system north of the castle suggest that this area had been ploughed during the 150 years that the castle declined in importance and may therefore pre-date the deer parks. Alternatively parts of the deer parks were being cultivated at various times during their lifetime and potentially into the early 18<sup>th</sup> century when the deer parks were dis-emparked.

The Scheduled moated site, which lies just to the north of the Newport Road, has not been excavated but it is possible that this was a landscape feature of one of the deer parks, perhaps even the site of the lodge.

The enclosure of the deer park and/or open fields to the north of Stafford Castle may have prompted the development of three historic regular courtyard farmsteads, whose plan form suggests a similar origin and philosophy as the development of Cresswell Farm discussed above. Of these only Hill Farm, lying to the east of the M6, survives as a farmstead; only the farmhouse survives at Brookhouse Farm on the south western side of Doxey and Burleyfields Farm was demolished in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are two other historic farmstead within the HECA. Aston Bank Farm displays a loose courtyard plan. This plan form has been identified in archaeological excavations and documentary sources in other parts of the country as dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that this farmstead may have similarly early origins even if the current farm buildings are later in date. The Grade II Doxey House, located within the village, probably originated is a 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse. It was remodelled in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and currently forms part of a complex of late 20<sup>th</sup> century sheltered housing, which replaced the farm buildings.

The historic landscape character across the zone has changed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the field systems have been removed since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in response to a demand for increased productivity which occurred following the Second World War. Some of the miscellaneous floodplain fields are being managed as a nature reserve, Doxey Marshes, where floodplain

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<sup>113</sup> Darlington & Soden 2007: 194-6

<sup>114</sup> Youngs & Morgan 2001: 45

marshes are being encouraged to support a wide range of wetland wildlife as well as providing public access.

### **Designated Historic Environment Assets**

Three Scheduled Monuments lie within the zone. There are also four Listed Buildings and the Foregate Street Conservation Area lies adjacent to the east (137).

### **Historic Environment Considerations**

The character area is dominated by 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century watermeadows aligning the River Sow. There are three Scheduled Monuments which have their origins within in the medieval period and would have had close relationships with the landscape around them. The setting of Stafford Castle has not been closely studied but three deer parks are known to have been established in association with it, although there is evidence for arable agriculture across parts of this area. There is probably a close association between the development of the watermeadow and the origins of Cresswell Farm.

Consequently any future development with 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, which may retain historic buildings.
- Potential impact upon the well preserved watermeadow system which lies along the River Sow.
- How development may impact upon the setting of designated sites.
- It would need to assess the impacts upon above and below ground archaeology, particularly where deposits may survive sealed beneath the alluvium of the valley.

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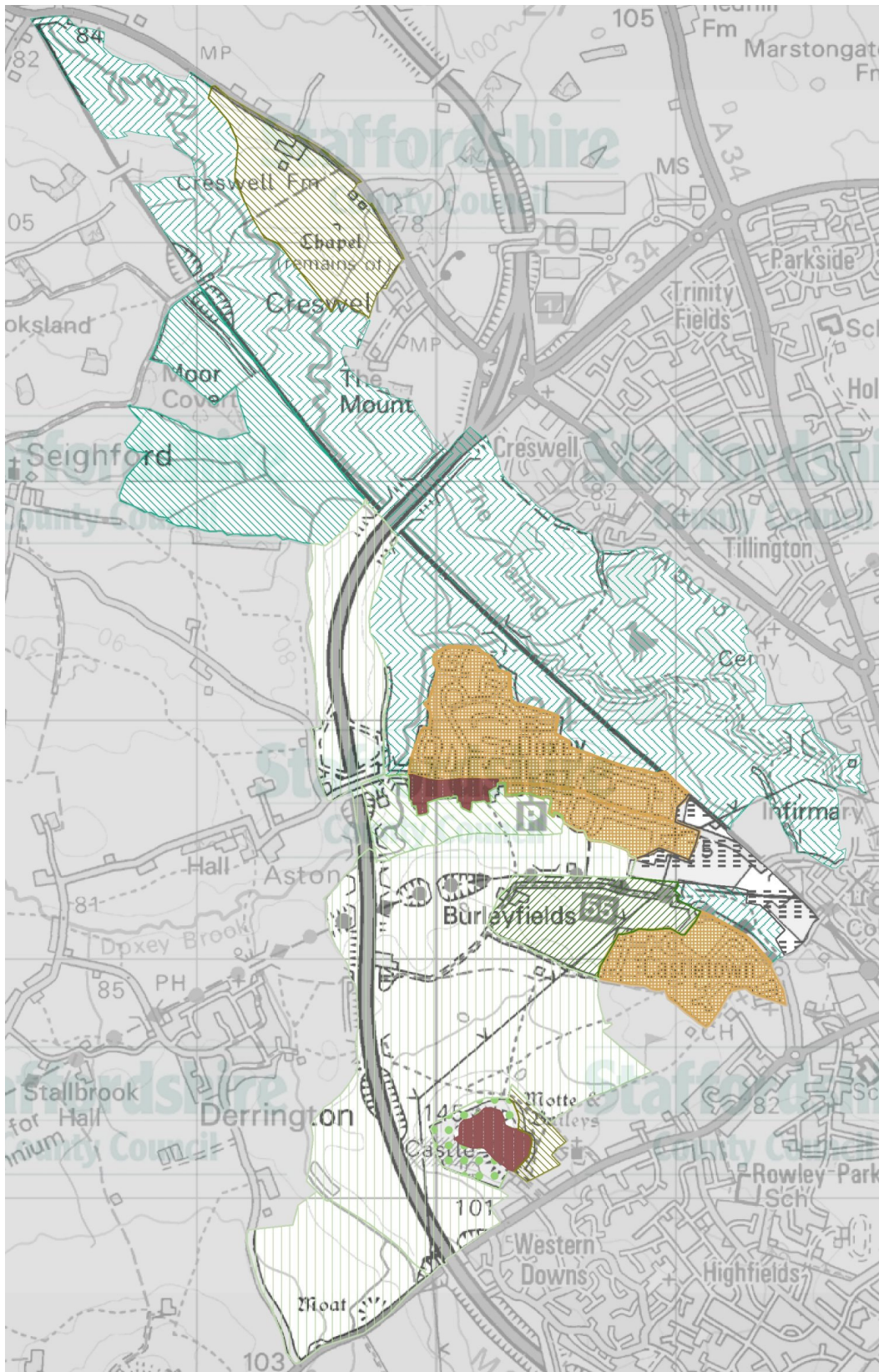
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**Legend**

- Early Irregular Enclosure
- Industrial & Extractive
- Miscellaneous Floodplain Fields
- Piecemeal Enclosure
- Plantations
- Post 1880s Re-organised fields
- Post 1880s Settlement
- Pre 1880s Settlement
- Pre 1880s drained wetlands
- Pre 1880s paddocks & closes

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Map 8: Refined HLC