

Appendix 2: Historic Environment Character Area Overviews for Stone

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

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

For further information regarding the Historic Environment Record (HER); Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and designated sites please contact:

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

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

Archaeological and historic documentation

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

Historic Environment Assets Summary

The current understanding of the later prehistoric landscape of England suggests that it had mostly been heavily wooded until the Bronze Age. Some clearance may have begun to take place by this period to support a small scale pastoral economy when humans were settling down to farm specific landscapes. There is some evidence for human activity during the Neolithic and Bronze Age within the character area, in particular the Scheduled Bronze Age barrow lying in Swynnerton Park¹. A further two possible barrows were also noted within the park during the 1940s, although it is not known to what extent these survive². Towards the western side of the character area at Pirehill the remains of a possible Bronze Age ring ditch³ 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

¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00501; English Heritage SM No. 22425

² Staffordshire HER: PRN 01837

³ 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 Bridge⁴.

Further evidence for Neolithic/Bronze Age activity has been found near Cold Norton farm where a collection of six stone tools⁵ 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 alignment⁶ 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 period⁷. To the south of Aston-by-Stone a rectilinear enclosure seen on aerial photographs has been interpreted as a possible Roman temporary camp⁸.

There is little tangible evidence for activity during the Saxon period, although a number of artefacts were recovered from Swynnerton Park which included 6th to 11th century finds along with others of Roman and Medieval date⁹. 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 Chebsey¹⁰. 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

⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 03684

⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 0069; PRN 02101; PRN 02102; PRN 02103; PRN 02104

⁶ 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)

⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 05067 and PRN 05068

⁸ 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)

⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04102

¹⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00097

was held by the Bishops of Lichfield and the church contains the tombs of four bishops¹¹.

The listed buildings within the character area are mostly concentrated within the settlements. Eccleshall was established as a town in 1199¹² and there are fifty listed buildings within the historic core. The earliest of these is the Grade I Holy Trinity Church which has 13th century origins¹³. The earliest vernacular buildings have been dated from the 16th century onwards. To the north of the town the medieval remains of the Scheduled Eccleshall Castle, a palace owned by the Bishops of Lichfield, survive although the current house is of 17th century date¹⁴. A number of 16th and 17th century timber framed houses survive in the other historic settlements although the earliest known is a late 15th/early 16th century property in Yarnfield which originated as an open hall house¹⁵. During the 20th century Eccleshall and Yarnfield have seen the greatest expansion of housing, whilst on the eastern edge part of the suburbs of Stone, at Walton-by-Stone, extend into the character area.

Scattered across the landscape, both separate from and located within settlements, are 74 historic farmsteads 14 of which contain at least one Listed Building. Over half of these farms display a regular courtyard plan form, which nationally are seen to date from the late 18th century¹⁶. The regular courtyard plan is the most common form in Staffordshire and is spread widely across the landscape. These forms appear to represent a deliberate development aimed at improving agricultural productivity being taken forward by wealthy landowners at this period. Three of these farmsteads within the HECA are associated with Listed 17th century farmhouses, but at Barnend in Pershall retains a 17th century barn within its plan¹⁷. This evidence suggests that some of these regular courtyard plans represent the rebuilding of earlier farmsteads and not just the establishment of new farms within the landscape during the late 18th and 19th centuries. The other farmstead plan forms within the character area are not as easily dated as some examples across England have shown medieval origins; however the majority appear to be post medieval period to 19th century in date. The dispersed plans and the loose courtyard plans suggest incremental development over a number of years if not centuries. Sixteen farmsteads in the character area have been identified as being of a loose courtyard plan, with 10 being of a dispersed plan and 5 linear plans. Quaker Farm, to the north of Shallowford, has a loose courtyard plan and contains a Listed timber frame farmhouse whose origins pre-date the 17th century¹⁸. Five further loose courtyard farms associated with Listed buildings of 17th to 19th century date perhaps re-affirming the hypothesis of incremental development.

¹¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07253

¹² Staffordshire HER: PRN 02348

¹³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07253

¹⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00213; English Heritage SM no. 21525

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Lake 2009: 19

¹⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 14057, PRN 08107, PRN 07246 and PRN 07332

¹⁸ 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 fields¹⁹ covered much of the character area and have been identified as being associated with all of the Domesday places as well as a further three settlements which were first recorded in documentary sources in the 12th and 13th centuries. This pattern of arable agriculture, where two or more large fields were divided into individual strips whereby the local people held scattered strips among them, was probably in place by the late Saxon period. Ridge and furrow earthworks²⁰, 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 Marston²¹.

The open fields were often enclosed, within Staffordshire, from the late medieval period onwards by a means of piecemeal enclosure. This process was carried out through a means of informal, verbal agreements between farmers who wished to consolidate their holdings into a block rather than being scattered across two or more fields. The piecemeal enclosure is identifiable in the landscape through the fossilisation of medieval plough lines in the field boundaries as a reverse 'S' or as a dog-leg shape. Piecemeal enclosure occurred at different dates across the county, but had begun by the 13th century²². Fourteen of the historic farmsteads are closely associated with areas of piecemeal enclosure; one of these is Quaker Farm, which pre-dates the 17th century. Ten farms, including Quaker Farm, have origins which cannot be closely dated, but it is possible that they developed as part of the enclosure of this landscape from the late medieval and post medieval periods. Large areas of piecemeal enclosure remain legible across the landscape of the HECA.

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

¹⁹ 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)

²⁰ 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)

²¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04578, 04589, 20362, 20400, 20401 and MST 14319

²² 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.1725²³ and a landscape park was established to the south of it with its associated plantations. The famous 18th century landscape gardener, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown drew up plans for the park, some of which were implemented. Although some of Brown's planting survives the parkland was remodelled in the early to mid 19th century and this is the layout which largely survives²⁴.

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

Designated Historic Environment Assets

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

Historic Environment Considerations

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

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

²³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07808

²⁴ 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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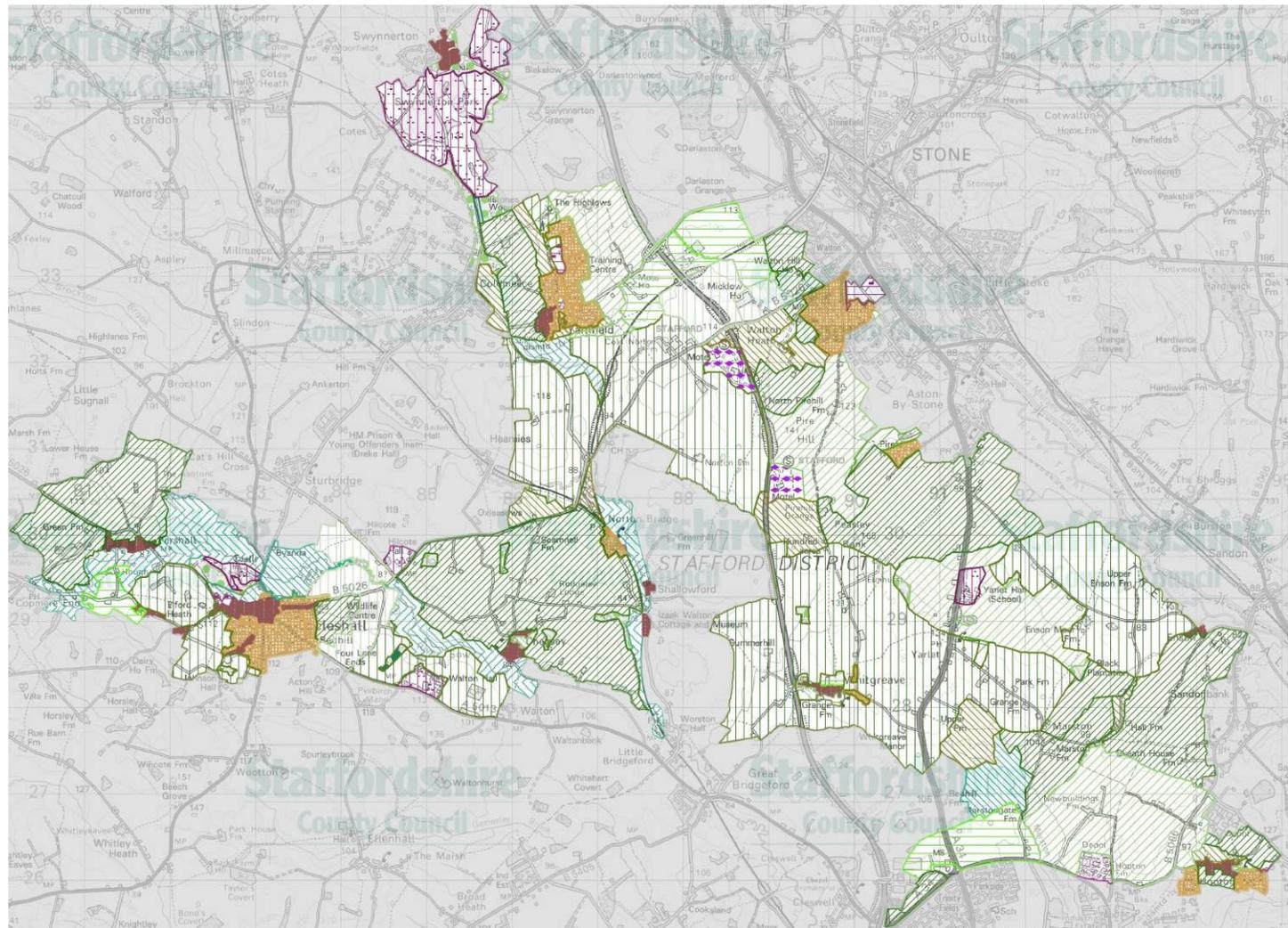
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Legend

-  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 1: Refined HLC

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Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 13f

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 suggests that during the medieval period this was a landscape of large areas of arable open fields²⁵, which may not all have been farmed contemporaneously and discrete areas of heath land and woodland. The open fields are still legible in the landscape fossilised within the post medieval field boundaries of piecemeal enclosure. Although none of the heath land survives there are scattered areas of known ancient woodland. The open fields, and subsequent piecemeal enclosure, are closely associated with the known medieval settlements. Buildings of medieval origin or moated sites survive within these settlements.

Also of significance within the character area is the Grade II Registered Sandon Park. The development of the parkland is likely to be associated with the removal of Great Sandon village and the development of watermeadows along the River Trent.

Historic farmsteads are dispersed across the landscape, although there are a considerable number located within the villages and hamlets. There has been some housing development around certain villages during the 20th century, notably Hixon, but other settlements have seen little expansion.

The character area covers 5,600ha and lies wholly within Stafford Borough.

Archaeological and historic documentation

Archaeological and historic research has been carried out on specific sites within the character area, although this has tended to concentrate in the central area around Sandon Park and along parts of the Trent Valley.

To the north and south of the 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 HECA lies just to the north of the Trent Valley. Consequently, given the number of prehistoric sites known downstream there remains the potential for many more similar sites to survive upon the gravel terraces of the principal river valleys throughout the study area. This could include important evidence from the Palaeolithic period which may include environmental material such

²⁵ 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)

as faunal remains, material culture such as flint tools and potentially even working sites. These will subsequently have been masked by the deposition of alluvium and colluvium. Often only the activities of extraction industries will extend deep enough to expose such material as in the case of the woolly rhinoceros found in gravel deposits at Whitemoor Haye Quarry in 2002. However, there does remain the potential for archaeologically significant remains associated with this period to be present relatively close to the surface largely as small unstratified finds. Where deeper excavations are required within the river valleys, as part of the development process, account must be taken of the potential to encounter Palaeolithic remains.

The amount of evidence for human activity from at least the Neolithic period within the Trent Valley suggests that the likelihood of the landscape of the eastern Staffordshire valleys having been largely cleared of woodland by the Bronze Age. Currently evidence for Neolithic/Bronze Age activity within the HECA relates to an early to mid Bronze Age burnt mound²⁶ found eroding out of the Milwich Brook. A Neolithic or Bronze Age axe has also been found near Milwich. 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. The ploughed out remains of a potential Bronze Age barrow are visible on aerial photographs as a ring ditch in the Trent Valley²⁷. A pit alignment²⁸ has also been identified on aerial photographs in the same area. Other pit alignments have been identified south east of Weston and south east of Hixon²⁹. These monuments have been dated to the Iron Age/Roman period and are considered to represent property boundaries.

Whatever the nature of settlement during the Iron Age proves to be, there is likely to have been a degree of continuity into the Roman period. The only known activity within the HECA is a hoard of Roman coins which was discovered near Burston³⁰. However, a scheduled earthwork enclosure to the north of Hollywood has been suggested as a possible Roman fort from its form and defensive location³¹.

Other features appear on aerial photographs which have not been closely dated, but may also prove to have prehistoric or Roman origins. A linear feature, located near the ring ditch and pit alignment, was identified on aerial

²⁶ 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'.

²⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04610. Ring ditch: Circular or near circular ditches, usually seen as cropmarks. 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).

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04609 and PRN 01432

³⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 01810

³¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00215; English Heritage SM no. 232

photographs along with possible hut circles. This may imply settlement or even a barrow cemetery, but further research is required to untangle the origins of these features³². A sub-rectangular enclosure has also been identified on aerial photographs, whose form may imply a Roman origin, but again further research would be required to prove this³³.

Evidence for human activity in the Saxon period almost exclusively comes from references to entries in Domesday Book (1086). Eleven extant settlements were recorded; the largest of these in terms of land and population was Sandon. All of them are recorded with at least one plough and there was a mill at Salt, which suggests that arable agriculture was important across the HECA by the late Saxon period. Three places are recorded in 1086 which are located in the north of the character area, Hilderstone, Cotwalton and Moddershall. There is currently little information for human activity in this area prior to the late Saxon period. However, the placename Cotwalton appears in a charter dated to AD 1004 known as the Will of Wulfric Spot³⁴. It is therefore possible that the paucity of information for human activity in this area of the HECA is due to little research currently having taken place.

By the end of the medieval period the landscape of the character area was dominated by arable open fields, which was closely associated with the villages recorded above and may have been in place by the late Saxon period. This was a pattern of arable agriculture consisting of two or more large fields divided into individual strips whereby the local people held scattered strips among them. Two further settlements are recorded by the late 12th and the mid 13th century; Stowe by Chartley (1199) and Amerton (1230). Many of these settlements retain medieval elements within them. Of the eight known moated sites lying within the HECA, seven are located either within or immediately adjacent to settlements. This suggests that they were probably the sites of the manor house in each place.

A manorial complex is identifiable as substantial earthworks within Sandon Landscape Park. The complex includes a Scheduled water-filled moat and a fishpond³⁵. There is no longer a settlement associated with this moat, but the remains of Great Sandon survive as earthworks to the south east of it. An excavation carried out in the 1960s identified a cobbled road and the foundations of several buildings along with medieval pottery³⁶. It is believed that the village was finally deserted during the 18th century to make way for the parkland. All Saint's Church would once have served the village. Its earliest phases date to the 12th century, but there is a tradition that it may have replaced an earlier structure³⁷. Another manorial complex comprising a moat and fishpond survives as a Scheduled monument in Gayton, which is known to have been the home of the Meverelle family until the late 13th

³² Staffordshire HER: PRN 04620

³³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04605

³⁴ Hooke 1983: 60

³⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00749; English Heritage SM no. 21511

³⁶ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00751

³⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00750

century³⁸. Although it is not known to have been associated with a moat, a late medieval manor house survives in Weston as a Grade II listed building³⁹.

Drointon and Milwich each contain two moated sites. The pairs of moats in both villages have not been the subject of either archaeological or historic research and it is therefore not known whether each pair was contemporary or whether one site was replaced by the other. However, it is likely that they all represent the site of a manor house⁴⁰.

Garshall moated site, to the north of the character area, is also a Scheduled Monument. This is the only one of the moated sites not to be closely associated with a known settlement. It is possible, therefore, that this moated site represents an area of assarting during the 12th and 13th century⁴¹. It lies in an area which was likely to have formed open fields in the medieval period.

Further surviving medieval buildings within the character area include a cruck-framed house in Weston and another at Fradswell. The former is believed to date between the late 15th and early 16th century⁴². The Grade II listed New Road Farmhouse has its origins as a medieval open hall house, although it underwent significant alteration during the 17th century⁴³.

The open fields were gradually enclosed as piecemeal enclosure from the late medieval period onwards. This form of field system still dominates across the character area. This process of enclosure occurred, within Staffordshire, from the late medieval period and into the late 18th century and is identifiable by the field boundaries which reflect the line of the medieval plough creating either reverse 'S' shape or dog-legs. It 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. This was often associated with a change in farming practices from arable to pasture.

Other areas of early enclosure, possibly dating from the post medieval period or earlier, can be identified as irregular or rectilinear fields. Their origins are obscure, but may in part be the result of the enclosure of heath land or woodland. Early assarting⁴⁴ may also have occurred to the north of Sandon Landscape Park, where scattered small Ancient Woodlands survive and in the area around the surviving Orange Hayes Wood small parts of which survive

³⁸ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00754; English Heritage SM no. 21502

³⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 08179

⁴⁰ Staffordshire HER: Drointon PRN 00739 and PRN 00740; Milwich PRN 00676 and PRN 00677

⁴¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00181; English Heritage SM no. 13468. Assarting: processes where fields are enclosed piecemeal in an area of woodland or heathland. Assarting occurred throughout the medieval period and later, but is particularly recorded in the 12th and 13th century in Staffordshire (cf Palliser 1976: 70-76).

⁴² Staffordshire HER: PRN 05810 and PRN 03957. Cruck house: A house in which a pair of curved timbers form a bowed A-frame which supports the roof independently of the walls. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

⁴³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 13511

⁴⁴ Assarting: the creation of agricultural land through the clearance of woodland.

as Ancient Woodland, the remainder having been replanted as coniferous woodland during the 20th century.

There are 113 surviving historic farmsteads across the character area; only six have been lost since the late 19th century although in some cases only the farmhouses survives. The greatest number of these farmsteads are of a regular courtyard plan, which has been recognised nationally as dating from the late 18th century⁴⁵. 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. The majority of these farms are scattered across the landscape, only 36% are located in villages or hamlets. This may suggest that they developed at a time when the open fields in these areas began to be enclosed; alternatively at least some of them may represent the wholesale re-planning of earlier farmsteads. This may certainly be true of those regular courtyard farms which are associated with earlier farm buildings particularly the three Grade II listed farmhouses and the Grade II listed Milwich Hall, which have 16th and 17th century origins⁴⁶. Three of these properties have later alterations which may prove to coincide with the development or re-development of the associated farm complex.

The remaining historic farmsteads are mostly associated with smaller farmers. Loose-courtyard plans (30%) and dispersed farmstead plans (10%) probably developed incrementally. Archaeological excavations in other parts of England have proved that loose-courtyard plans can date from the 13th century. It is, therefore, possible that some of these farmsteads have medieval origins even if the surviving buildings prove to be later in date. Within the character area two loose-courtyard plans are associated with medieval farmhouses. New House Farm in Hixon, discussed above, originated as an open hall house whilst Ivy House farmhouse dates to the early 16th century⁴⁷.

There are only two areas within the HECA where 18th/19th century planned enclosure occurs: to the south of Hixon, some of which is known to have been created out of Hixon Heath, and around Aston Lodge Farm, to the east of Stone. Aston Lodge Farm itself displays a regular courtyard plan form suggesting it may have originated at a similar period to the field system and plantations. Planned enclosure is identifiable by the straight field boundaries which create a geometric pattern in the landscape. This occurred because they were carefully laid out by surveyors.

Sandon Landscape Park dominates the central portion of the HECA. The existing hall dates to 1852 and was re-built to replace an earlier hall built c.1770, which was damaged in a fire in 1848. The Grade II Registered

⁴⁵ Lake 2009: 19

⁴⁶ Staffordshire HER: Manor Farm PRN 07704; Amerton Grange PRN 08164; Old Hall Farmhouse PRN 08160 and Milwich Hall PRN 07705 (the latter being associated with a moated site – see above)

⁴⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07712

Landscape Park dates from at least the 1770s with a kitchen garden created in the 1770s or 1780s⁴⁸. A Grade II listed model farm⁴⁹ was constructed, of regular courtyard plan, c.1782.

Possibly associated with the management of the Sandon estate are a series of well surviving water meadows lining the River Trent. 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. Other water meadow systems survive to the south west of Gayton and to the south of Amerton.

There are discrete areas across the character area where the historic field pattern has been impacted by field boundary removal during the 20th century to create large open areas to facilitate increased arable productivity. These include a field system which lies to the north of the 20th century Hixon Airfield. The airfield was laid out upon an area of 18th/19th century planned enclosure, which in turn had been created out of part of Hixon heath.

Most of the villages have seen areas housing development during the 20th century with Hixon more than doubling in extent. However, Milwich has seen little expansion whilst the nearby Coton has barely expanded at all.

Designated Historic Environment Assets

There are four Scheduled Monument within the Character Area and one Grade II Registered parkland. There are also 88 Listed Buildings and three Conservation Areas; Hilderstone (068), Moddershall Valley (076) and the Trent & Mersey Canal (083).

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.

Medieval and post medieval landscapes are legible within the character area as are several features of medieval date including the Scheduled moated sites and various Listed Buildings. It also contains the Registered Sandon Park and its associated features, which includes the well-surviving watermeadows along the Trent. Other watermeadows survive elsewhere. On the whole the character area is of considerable historic environment interest.

⁴⁸ Staffordshire HER: PRN 40111

⁴⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 011738; PRN 07739 and PRN 51849. 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)

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

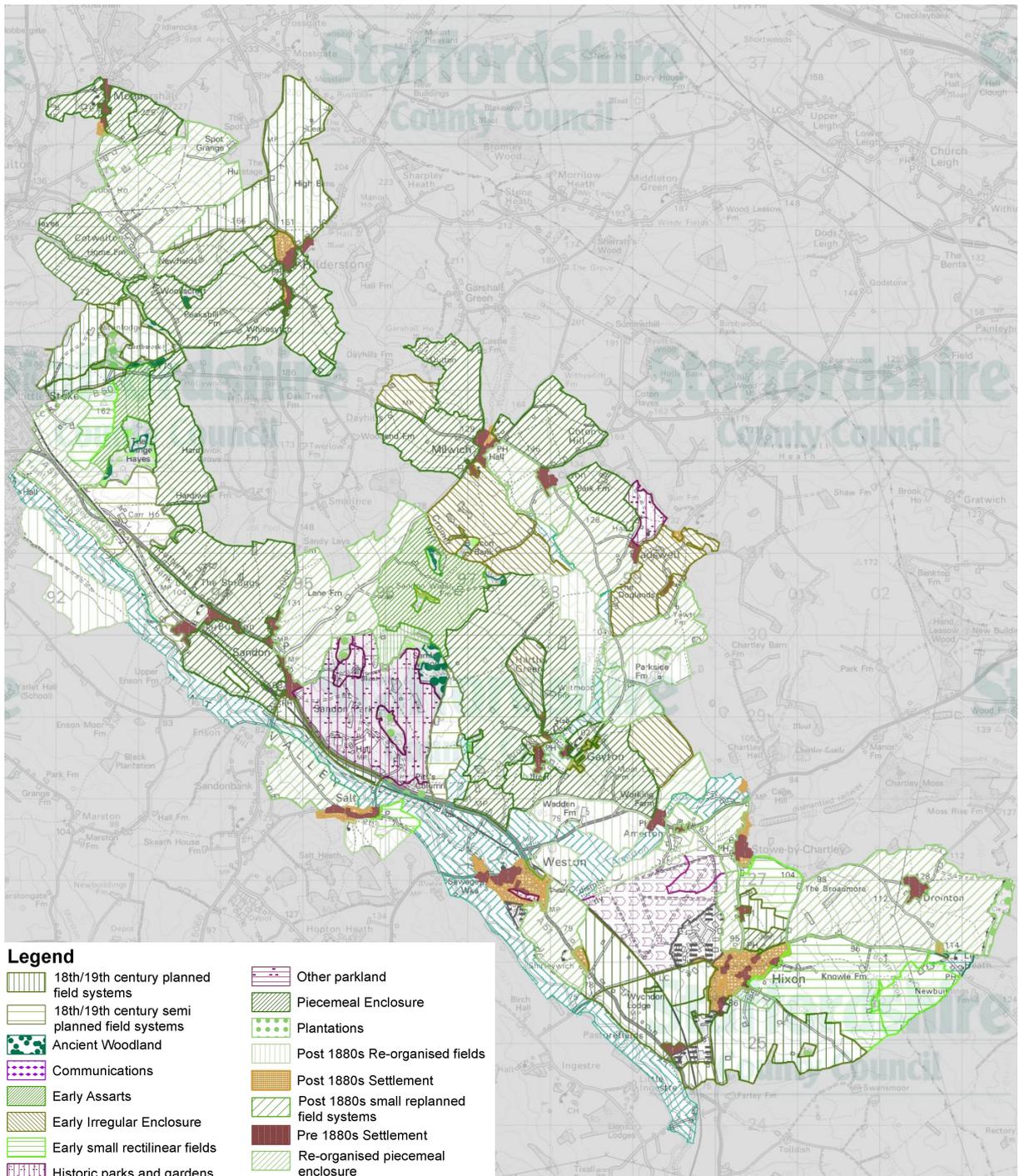
- Potential impact upon the villages and their associated field systems which retain the legibility of the former open fields. Of particular interest are the known, and potentially unknown, medieval buildings within the character area which contribute to the local character and distinctiveness of the villages and hamlets.
- 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, particularly in terms of the historic settlements but also for the potential for prehistoric and Roman sites to survive.
- There is also the potential for managing parts of this landscape under Agri-environment schemes particularly where it is associated with monuments.
- There is also the potential for promoting aspects of the historic environment within this landscape for the enjoyment of local people and visitors.

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Map 2: Refined HLC

Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 13h

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 town of Stone, which will be covered in greater depth by the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) project. There are other historic villages and hamlets across the zone, many of which have seen expansion during the second half of the 20th century. There are also 48 surviving historic farmsteads within the character area. A Scheduled moated site also survives at Hartwell.

Moddershall Valley retains ancient woodland along with watermills and associated structures which were essential to the success of the pottery industry from the 18th century. The importance of the valley has been recognised through the designation of the conservation area.

Several historic parklands are legible within the character area some are still associated with surviving country houses, most notably the Grade I Listed Barlaston Hall. In other cases the country house has been demolished.

There are many areas where the historic field systems survive well, but there are also discrete areas where field boundaries have been removed resulting in an erosion of the historic landscape character.

The character area covers 2,778ha and lies almost entirely within Stafford Borough, a small area to the north lies in Stoke-upon-Trent.

Archaeological and historic documentation

Archaeological work has tended to concentrate upon the historic core of Stone. A survey of the watermills of Moddershall Valley has been undertaken, but otherwise very little archaeological or historic work has been carried out within the HECA. Sites mentioned in this document are recorded on the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by Staffordshire County Council.

Historic Environment Assets Summary

The HECA covers the eastern side of the Upper Trent Valley. The lower Trent Valley within Staffordshire has been the subject of intensive archaeological surveys and these have shown that a great number of prehistoric and Roman sites survive as cropmarks⁵⁰. However, the Upper

⁵⁰ Cropmark: Monument visible as a mark in standing crops, parchmarks or soilmarks, but where no subsurface deposits have been proven eg by excavation or other ground disturbance. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009).

Trent Valley has not currently been the subject of a similar archaeological survey. However, it is likely that there remains the potential for many prehistoric sites to survive upon the gravel terraces within the character area. This could include important evidence from the Palaeolithic period which could include environmental material such as faunal remains, material culture such as flint tools and potentially even working sites. These will subsequently have been masked by the deposition of alluvium and colluvium. Often only the activities of extraction industries will extend deep enough to expose such material as in the case of the woolly rhinoceros found in gravel deposits at Whitemoor Haye Quarry in 2002. However, there does remain the potential for archaeologically significant remains associated with this period to be present relatively close to the surface largely as small unstratified finds. Where deeper excavations are required within the river valleys, as part of the development process, account must be taken of the potential to encounter Palaeolithic remains.

The amount of evidence for human activity from at least the Neolithic period within the lower Trent Valley suggests the landscape of the Trent valley had been largely cleared of woodland by the Bronze Age. Currently evidence for Neolithic/Bronze Age activity within the HECA relates to two possible Bronze Age burial mounds, which survive as cropmark ring ditches⁵¹. Both of these features have been identified on aerial photographs adjacent to sub-rectangular enclosures and lie within the valley, one at Aston on the southern edge of the HECA and the other to the north between Tittensor and Barlaston⁵².

Six Neolithic/Bronze Age axes or axe hammers are recorded on the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) within the HECA although in some case the precise location of the find is unknown⁵³. It is possible that some of these are duplicate entries, but if they are not they represent human presence in the area, which may hint at more intensive activity than is currently known. Other items found across the HECA include a possible Palaeolithic antler pick and a probable Iron Age spear head⁵⁴. Such finds probably represent casual loss and do not add to our understanding of what activities were being carried out in the Prehistoric period within the character area. However, Bury Bank hillfort⁵⁵ lies adjacent to the character area (see HECA 26a) and overlooks the river valley. The presence of the hillfort suggests a centralised power base was present within the area from at least the late Bronze Age/Iron Age, which oversaw a dispersed settlement pattern across the landscape supporting the theory of woodland clearance from this period. The hillfort would have provided a cultural, economic and

⁵¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04610. Ring ditch: Circular or near circular ditches, usually seen as cropmarks. 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).

⁵² Staffordshire HER: PRN 04613 and PRN 04614

⁵³ Staffordshire HER: PRNs 00661; 02028; 02032; 02197 and 02742

⁵⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 01831 and PRN 00671

⁵⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00022; English Heritage SM no. 21566

administrative focus for the surrounding communities, some of whom are likely to have been living within this character area.

There is little evidence for Roman activity within the HECA, although a rectilinear enclosure identified on aerial photographs has been interpreted as a Roman temporary camp⁵⁶. A geophysical survey picked up a probable ditch and a possible road, but other features identified were believed not to be associated with the possible camp. A Roman coin was found in Stone and in the 19th century Roman pottery was also found. The precise locations for these finds are not known. Neither is the location of the Saxon and Danish coins, which were found prior to the mid 19th century⁵⁷. A possible Anglo-Saxon horseshoe was also discovered during drainage works somewhere in Stone during the late 19th century⁵⁸. This is, currently, the only evidence for activity within Stone prior to the medieval period.

A burial believed to date to c.600AD was discovered at Barlaston. It appears to have been an isolated grave, rather than forming part of a cemetery⁵⁹.

Evidence for human activity in the later Saxon period mostly comes from references to entries in Domesday Book (1086). Six places within the HECA are recorded: Aston by Stone, Barlaston, Meaford, Stoke by Stone, Tittensor and Walton⁶⁰. A priest is recorded in the Walton entry, but there is currently no further evidence for a church associated with this settlement. Although Oulton does not appear in Domesday Book a coin hoard was recovered from nearby which included coins from Edward the Confessor's reign (1042–1066) and William I's (1066-1087).

Stone is not recorded in Domesday Book, although as noted above there is some limited evidence for human activity albeit from isolated finds. Furthermore references to a 7th century monastery in Stone are to be treated with caution; as is the reference to a 10th century nunnery. The earliest evidence for Stone priory comes from a charter of 1138 to 1147⁶¹ and an archaeological watching brief recovered eleven fragments of medieval architectural stone. Following more detailed study two of these appeared to have come from a later 12th century cloister.

Stone was granted the right to hold a market in 1258 by Stone Priory⁶². It is likely that the foundation of the town dates from a similar period, although the

⁵⁶ 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).

⁵⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00662

⁵⁸ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00669

⁵⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00605

⁶⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRNs 02368, 02372, 02507, 01789, 02581 and 02590

⁶¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00666

⁶² Staffordshire HER: PRN 02455; Burgage plot: A plot of land longer than it is wide, can include any structures on it. Typical of medieval towns. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009).

earliest documentary reference to Stone being a town is dated 1364⁶³. There are 62 listed buildings and structures within Stone, but these mostly date to the 18th and 19th century. However, it is possible that some of the buildings may retain earlier elements within their fabric.

A mill is recorded in the Tittensor entry for Domesday Book and all of the settlements are recorded with plough lands suggesting that arable formed an important part of the economy of this HECA by at least the late Saxon period. Arable farming during the medieval period, within the character area, was carried out in the form of large open fields⁶⁴. Open field agriculture has been identified to the south of Hartwell Lane, in the north east of the HECA, where ridge and furrow⁶⁵ earthworks have also been identified on aerial photographs⁶⁶. Open fields have also been identified to the north of Stone, at Common Plot, where further ridge and furrow earthworks survive⁶⁷ and also around Walton. The open fields formed a pattern of arable agriculture, where two or more large fields were divided into individual strips held by the local people. This was a system whereby everyone held at least one strip in each of the large fields. The open fields were enclosed within Staffordshire, from the late medieval period; a process which continued into the late 18th century. It was carried out through a means of informal, verbal agreements between farmers who wished to consolidate their holdings into a block. This was often associated with a change in farming practices from arable to pasture. The open field system survives in the HECA in the form of piecemeal enclosure, where the hedge lines reflect the route of the medieval plough creating either reverse 'S' shape or dog-leg boundaries. Piecemeal enclosure survives to the south of Hartwell Lane.

A Scheduled moated site is located to the south of Hartwell Lane, which may well have been closely associated with the organisation of the open field system⁶⁸. The moat appears to have been the site of a manor house held by the Chetwynd family in the late 13th century. A private chapel is also known to have been located on the site at this period. A document dating to the 14th century describes the complex as including a hall with chambers, a gatehouse with a stable and a bakehouse. Hartwell is first recorded in documentary sources in the mid to late 12th century, but it is not currently known if this is a reference to the moated site or to a settlement⁶⁹. Great Hartwell farmhouse is located within the moated site. Hartwell Hall and landscape park to the east

⁶³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 02355

⁶⁴ 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)

⁶⁵ 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)

⁶⁶ Staffordshire HER: PRN 20415 and PRN 20416

⁶⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00604

⁶⁸ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00609; English Heritage SM no. 21507

⁶⁹ Horowitz 2005: 302

dates to the mid to late 19th century⁷⁰. Hartwell Hall Farm and Rose Cottage appear, from map evidence, to pre-date the hall itself.

There are 48 surviving historic farmsteads across the character area, although in some cases only the farmhouses survive. A further nine have been lost since the late 19th century. The greatest number of these farmsteads are of a regular courtyard plan, which has been recognised nationally as dating from the late 18th century⁷¹. 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. The majority of these farms are scattered across the landscape, only 27% are located in villages or hamlets. It is currently not known to what degree these farmsteads were constructed as new farms in the landscape or to what extent they may represent the wholesale re-planning of earlier farmsteads. This may certainly be true of those regular courtyard farms which are associated with earlier farm buildings notably the Grade II Listed farmhouse at Old Meaford Hall, which dates from the late 16th century⁷².

Only the Grade II farmhouse survives at Brassworks farm to the south of Stone. The farmhouse was built in 1794 and formed part of a brass foundry at that date, however, this enterprise closed c. 1830 and it appears that the site may then have been used as a farm⁷³.

The farmstead of Oldlanes Mill Farm⁷⁴ is associated with an early 19th century Grade II farmhouse which suggests that the whole complex was built in a single phase at this date. However, the first edition 6" OS map (1880) records this site as a watermill (corn) and to the north a possible former watercourse survives as an earthwork.

The remaining historic farmsteads are mostly associated with smaller farmers. Loose-courtyard plans (14%) and dispersed farmstead plans (26%) probably developed incrementally. There are also three surviving linear farmsteads, two of which are located near Great Hartwell moated site and are therefore associated with a landscape which had formed part of an open field (see above). It is possible that this type of farmstead had its origins in the medieval period, but further work would be required to establish the origins of those within the character area.

The Home Farm associated with Meaford Hall is dispersed in plan. Meaford Hall itself is a Grade II* listed building of c.1830, although elements of the 17th century manor house survive within its fabric⁷⁵. It is probably the influence of such estates during the 18th and 19th centuries which accounts for much of the

⁷⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 40310

⁷¹ Lake 2009: 19

⁷² Staffordshire HER: PRN 07796

⁷³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 12780 and PRN 03732

⁷⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07797

⁷⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 01356

extant historic landscape character. The landscape park surrounding the hall survives well and now forms part of the Meaford Conservation Area⁷⁶. Many of the buildings within the village of Meaford date to the late 19th century and were funded by the Jervis family of Meaford Hall.

A further landscape park existed around Darlaston Hall, which may have had at least 17th century origins. The hall was rebuilt in the 19th century, but was demolished during the second half of the 20th century⁷⁷. The earliest area of parkland identifiable at Darlaston lay to the north of the Hall where the walled kitchen garden survives⁷⁸. An extension to the landscape park took place between the mid 1830s and the 1880s⁷⁹, which resulted in the removal of the small hamlet of Darlaston Green⁸⁰. The origins of the hamlet are currently unknown.

A further three historic landscape parks survive within the character area. This includes the large parkland associated with the Grade I Listed Barlaston Hall. The hall was built between 1756 and 1758 and lies adjacent to St John the Baptist Church, which is believed to have at least 15th/16th century origins, although it was substantially rebuilt in the late 19th century⁸¹. The other two parklands are associated with Oulton Grange and Hayes House, the latter dating to the mid-late 19th century⁸².

There are only two areas within the HECA where 18th/19th century planned enclosure occurs: in the north of the character area above Barlaston Park and to the south west of Aston by Stone. Planned enclosure is identifiable by the straight field boundaries which create a geometric pattern in the landscape. This occurred because they were carefully laid out by surveyors. It is possible that the re-ordering of this landscape was influenced by the presence of the four large estates mentioned above as part of a national programme of agricultural improvement.

Further evidence for 18th/19th century agricultural improvements is present within the character area in the form of watermeadows, which line the River Trent. 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. There are particularly well surviving watermeadows along that part of the River Trent which passes through Stone and on towards Aston by Stone.

The Trent & Mersey Canal, another 18th century innovation, crosses through the character area on an approximate north – south alignment. It was

⁷⁶ Staffordshire HER: PRN 40162

⁷⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN MST14487; Staffordshire Past-track Donor Ref: SAMS Acc. No., G94.290, img: 1586 (18/2036)

⁷⁸ Staffordshire HER: PRN MST 14486

⁷⁹ Ordnance Survey 1" Map dated 1834-6 and Ordnance Survey 6" OS map 1880

⁸⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN MST 14485

⁸¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07220 and PRN 07219

⁸² Staffordshire HER: PRN 40312 and PRN 07774

constructed by the engineers' James Brindley and Hugh Henshall and opened in 1771⁸³.

Moddershall Valley Conservation Area lies to the east of the character area and is of particular historic and archaeological interest. The steep sided valley is dominated by ancient woodland, with areas of probable 19th century plantation. The valley is famed for its contribution to the Staffordshire pottery industry, located to the north around Stoke-on-Trent, from the late 18th century into the 20th century. A series of watermills were constructed along the valley to grind flint and bone for the industry, three of which are Listed⁸⁴. The mills were fed by separate mill races which survive.

There are areas within the HECA where the field systems have been considerably altered in the 20th century, principally through the removal of field boundaries to create very large fields to facilitate increased production. This includes the field system to the north east of Stone, around Stone Park Farm. Other areas include that lying to the north east of Meaford, which is also the site of large-scale 20th century industrial development. The north eastern corner of the character area, to the west of Barlaston, has also been impacted by field boundary removal.

Large-scale industrial and housing developments have also been constructed during the course of the second half of the 20th century. Stone has more than doubled in size during the 20th century and now encompasses the former hamlet of Walton. Further large-scale industrial development has occurred on the southern side of the River Trent. Barlaston has also substantially expanded, mostly with housing development.

Designated Historic Environment Assets

There is one Scheduled Monument within the Character Area Great Hartwell moated site⁸⁵. There are also 108 Listed Buildings and four Conservation Areas; Meaford (109), Moddershall Valley (076), Stone (001) and the Trent & Mersey Canal (083).

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.

The character area has great potential in terms of the historic environment, although the historic character has been impacted to some degree during the 20th century. However, there is great potential for below ground archaeology to survive within the historic core of Stone and other settlements.

⁸³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 05228

⁸⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07778, PRN 07924 and PRN 07779

⁸⁵ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00609; English Heritage SM no. 21507

Of particular interest within the character area is Moddershall Valley, with its surviving watermills and other structures which made important contributions to the north Staffordshire pottery industry from the 18th century onwards.

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

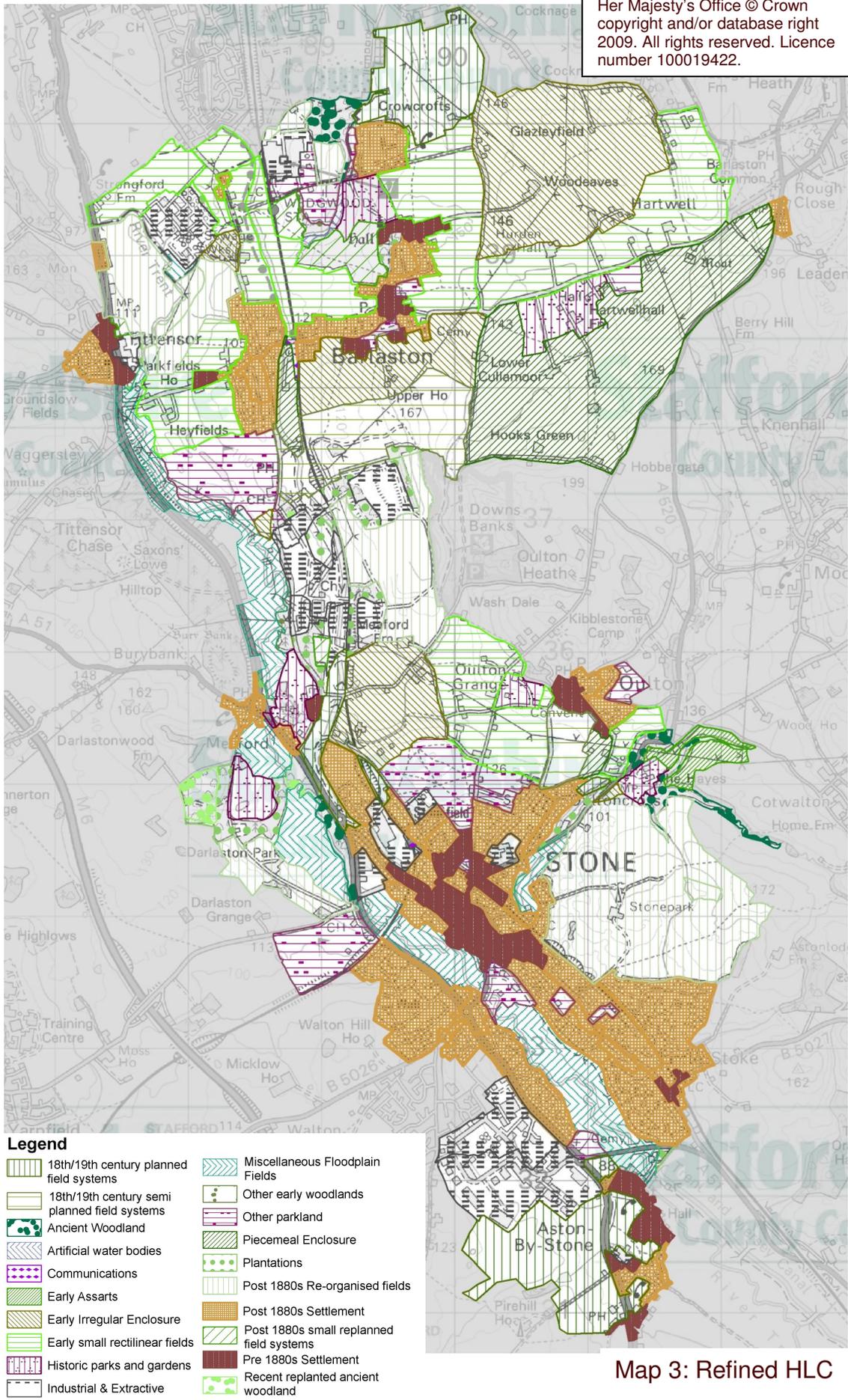
- Potential impact upon the surviving dispersed settlement pattern and in particular where the origins of the landscape are closely tied to the origins of the farmsteads, which may retain historic buildings.
- Potential impact upon the historic character of the landscape and how this could be retained or reflected in any development; particularly where it is strongly associated with the historic built environment.
- The impact upon the relict industrial landscape which potentially contains unknown earthworks and archaeological deposits charting its evolution.
- The impact upon the surviving historic landscape parklands.
- 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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Map 3: Refined HLC

Historic Environment Character Area (HECA) 26a

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 comprised of field systems of mostly 18th/19th century date, although earlier field systems survive associated with the scattered small settlements. There is a considerable amount of woodland, much of which pre-dates the 20th century. The HECA also incorporates the Trentham Registered park and garden.

The character area covers 3,748ha and lies almost entirely within Stafford Borough, a small area to the north lies in Newcastle-under-Lyme District.

Archaeological and historic documentation

Several excavations have occurred at Bury Bank hillfort and various historic and archaeological assessments have been carried out at Trentham Gardens.

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 evidence for human activity dating from the Neolithic/Bronze Age within the character area. Three Neolithic/Bronze Age tools and a Bronze Age axe have been found, although these probably represent casual loss and do not add to our understanding of the activities being carried out during the prehistoric period within the character area. However, two probable Bronze Age barrows⁸⁶ lie within the Scheduled Bury Bank hillfort, whilst a further probable barrow, associated with a burial, was found near Tittensor Hill⁸⁷. 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. Consequently they support the hypothesis of a landscape which had begun to be cleared by the Bronze Age. Three further sites may also have been barrows, but which now survive as ring ditches⁸⁸ visible on

⁸⁶ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00601

⁸⁷ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00595

⁸⁸ Ring ditch: Circular or near circular ditches, usually seen as cropmarks. Ring ditches may be the remains of ploughed out round barrows, round houses, or of modern features such as

aerial photographs. Large areas of heathland survived within this character area in the late 18th century, particularly Cotes Heath to the south east, Tittensor Chase to the south east and an area of land to the south of Swynnerton Old Park. The formation of this landscape may have begun in the Bronze Age through the clearance of woodland.

Bury Bank hillfort itself has not been dated and although these monuments are usually associated with the Iron Age, some are known to have earlier origins⁸⁹. The presence of the hillfort suggests a centralised power base was present within the area from at least the late Bronze Age/Iron Age, which oversaw a dispersed settlement pattern across the landscape supporting the theory of woodland clearance from this period. The hillfort would have provided a cultural, economic and administrative focus for the surrounding communities. A possible late Iron Age enclosure was recorded at Groundslow, its function was not established but it may have been an enclosure around a farmstead or for penning animals⁹⁰.

There is currently little evidence for human activity dating to the Roman period, although a possible Roman road has been identified at Hanchurch⁹¹. However, it is likely that there was a degree of continuity across this landscape from the Iron Age into the Roman period.

Evidence for human activity during the Saxon period is mainly implied from entries in Domesday Book (1086). Three surviving settlements, which have entries in Domesday Book, lie either within or immediately adjacent to the character area. Hanchurch to the north west of the character area (within HECA 27) is recorded as having 9 heads of household. The entry for Trentham appears to imply that two different settlements are being described and it has been suggested that part of the entry is describing settlement on the site of the later town of Newcastle-under-Lyme⁹². The larger of the two places is taken as describing Trentham with ten heads of household, including one freeman. A priest is also described implying that a church was present. In the churchyard of St Mary's and All Saints, Trentham there is the remains of a Saxon or early Norman cross, which may be the remains of a religious site⁹³. A priory of Augustinian Canons had been established at Trentham by the late 12th century. The current St Mary and All Saints church, although rebuilt in 1844, retains features which probably came from the medieval priory church. Excavations carried out in the mid 19th century revealed the remains of buildings and building rubble to the east of the chancel. The priory itself was dissolved in 1537, when it eventually passed into the hands of the Leveson family of Wolverhampton⁹⁴.

searchlight emplacements. (Scope note reproduced from the Thesaurus of Monument Types by kind permission of English Heritage © 2009)

⁸⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 00022; English Heritage SM no. 21566

⁹⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04601.

⁹¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 04710

⁹² Studd 1990-1: 16

⁹³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07804

⁹⁴ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07803

The final place mentioned in Domesday Book is Hatton which was described as waste; however, this does not necessarily imply that this was not a focus of human activity in the Saxon and early Norman period. The extant settlement of Upper Hatton lies in HECA 5a.

It is certain that Hatton was settled by the end of the medieval period as there is evidence for arable agriculture to the north east of Upper Hatton in the form of open fields⁹⁵. This was a pattern of arable agriculture, where two or more large fields were divided into individual strips held by the local people in a system whereby everyone held strips in each field. Evidence for the open field system survives within this area in the form of piecemeal enclosure, where the hedge lines reflect the route of the medieval plough creating either reverse 'S' shape or dog-leg boundaries. This process of enclosure within Staffordshire began to occur in the late medieval period with the final phases occurring during the late 18th century. It 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. This was often associated with a change in farming practices from arable to pasture. This landscape to the north of Upper Penn is now interspersed with small plantations established during the 20th century. Clifford's Wood to the south of these fields had been planted by the late 19th century upon part of Swynnerton or Cotes Heath. It represents an attempt during the 19th century to make poor quality land productive. In the medieval period the proximity of the heathland to the settlement would have provided various economic benefits including fuel and pasture.

Other settlements are first recorded later in the medieval period. Butterton, to the north, is first mentioned in documentary sources in the 12th century and, like Hatton, appears to have developed an open field system of arable farming particularly to the south of the village. This also survives as piecemeal enclosure. To the east of Butterton lies Church Wood, recognised as ancient woodland. It appears that the western half of the wood was felled for farming land prior to the late 19th century.

Blakelow, in the south of the HECA, was first mentioned in documents in the late 13th century. The surviving associated field system is little changed from the late 19th century, but its earlier origins are obscure. It may have developed as an area of assarting⁹⁶ in either woodland or heath land. Beech, towards the centre of the character area, is first recorded in the 12th century and is associated with a surviving historic field system of small irregular fields. This is also likely to have been the result of assarting during the medieval period.

⁹⁵ 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)

⁹⁶ Assarting: processes where fields are enclosed piecemeal in an area of woodland or heathland. Assarting occurred throughout the medieval period and later, but is particularly recorded in the 12th and 13th century in Staffordshire (cf Palliser 1976: 70-76).

The small settlement of Groundslow Fields was first recorded in the late 13th century. The second element of the placename may imply that this had been an area of arable open field, although the Field suffix is first recorded in the late 17th century⁹⁷. However, the earlier history of this landscape has been obscured by the re-ordering which occurred during the 18th/19th century in the form of planned enclosure. This enclosure is dominant across the character area and is identifiable by the straight field boundaries which create a geometric pattern in the landscape. This occurred because they were carefully laid out by surveyors. The large areas of heathland, much of which is still depicted on Yates' map of Staffordshire (1775), was enclosed in this manner.

Many of the surviving historic farmsteads across the character area were probably constructed at a similar period to the creation of the planned enclosure. Twenty-five historic farmsteads have been recognised as having a regular courtyard plan form representing over 70% of all the historic farmsteads in the HECA. This plan form has been recognised nationally as dating from the late 18th century⁹⁸. 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 listed, with Bitterton Grange Farm, being designated a Grade II*⁹⁹. This farm, along with Swynnerton Heath Farm¹⁰⁰, both date to the early 19th century, although it is possible that they may have replaced earlier buildings. The farmhouse at Cotes Lodge Farm, a Grade II listed building, is 17th century in origin¹⁰¹. However, it was re-fronted in the 18th century possibly at a similar period to the construction or re-construction of the farm buildings. It had been located in the heart of Swynnerton or Cotes Heath until the late 18th century and the name of the farm may suggest that it was originally built as a lodge for the keeper of a rabbit warren, or possibly a deer park.

A further nine historic farmsteads show a less planned form and are generally likely to have developed incrementally over a longer period of time. Some of them may have had their origins in the medieval or early post medieval period.

The site of the medieval priory was developed as a country estate by the Leveson and then the Leveson-Gower families from the late 16th century. This included a parkland, which was landscaped at various times between the 17th and 18th centuries; it forms a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden¹⁰². Trentham Hall was remodelled by the architect Charles Barry between 1834

⁹⁷ Horowitz 2005: 286

⁹⁸ Lake 2009: 19

⁹⁹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07019

¹⁰⁰ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07854

¹⁰¹ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07643

¹⁰² Staffordshire HER: PRN 40086

and 1842; this included the surviving service wing and the Italianate style grand entrance¹⁰³. The main living quarters were demolished in 1911-12.

The re-ordering of the wider landscape of the HECA during the 18th/19th century, in terms of both the field systems and regular courtyard farmsteads, was probably due in part to the impact of the Trentham estate. Charles Barry had also been responsible for the design of several of the farm buildings at the heart of the estate. Another country estate, Butterton House to the north of the HECA (in HECA 26b), was responsible for the building of Butterton Grange Farm in c. 1816.

The HECA on the whole is a farmed landscape of fields, however, 21% of the land coverage relates to woodland and of this 519ha pre-date the late 19th century. Old Swynnerton Park comprises the single largest woodland within the HECA and may have medieval origins. To the east of the character area some of the woodland is associated with the landscaping of the parkland at Trentham, although King's Wood is ancient woodland.

Designated Historic Environment Assets

There are two Scheduled Monument within the Character Area and part of the Grade II* Registered Trentham Park, which also forms a Conservation Area (136). There are also 42 Listed Buildings and three further Conservation Areas; Butterton (160), Hanchurch (078) and Swynnerton (013).

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.

Historic field systems of 18th/19th century date and earlier survive across the character area, which are associated with historic farmsteads and small settlements. The former have mostly enclosed large areas of heath land which had survived until at least the late 18th century. There is a strong woodland character across the HECA associated partly with Trentham Gardens, but also Swynnerton Old Park.

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, particularly upon the woodland areas, and how this could be retained

¹⁰³ Staffordshire HER: PRN 07817 and PRN 07816

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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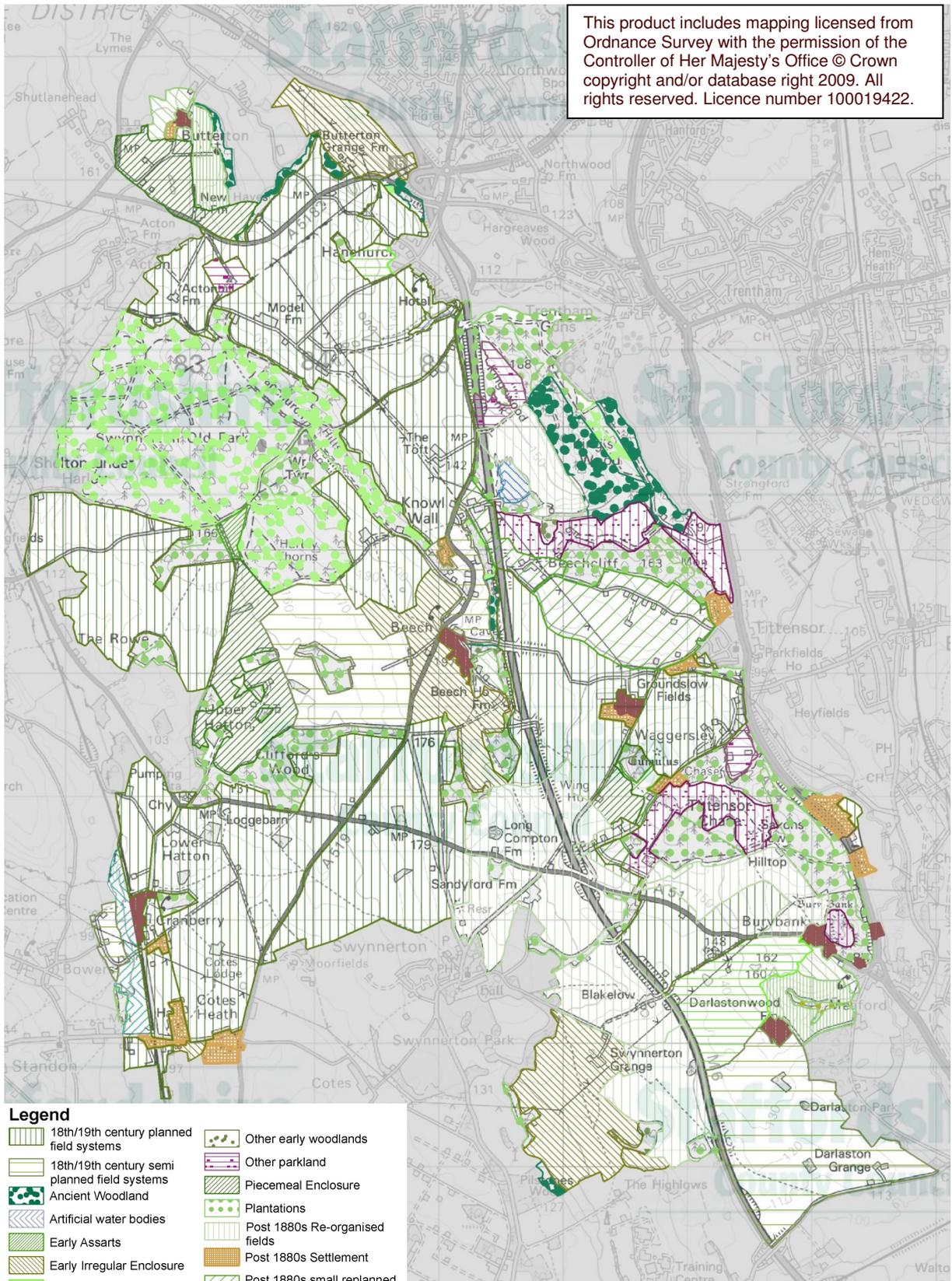
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- Legend**
- 18th/19th century planned field systems
 - 18th/19th century semi planned field systems
 - Ancient Woodland
 - Artificial water bodies
 - Early Assarts
 - Early Irregular Enclosure
 - Early small rectilinear fields
 - Historic parks and gardens
 - Industrial & Extractive
 - Miscellaneous Floodplain Fields
 - Natural Open Water
 - 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 paddocks & closes
 - Recent replanted ancient woodland
 - Recent woodland clearance

Map 4: Refined HLC