



CHURCH STRETTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL 2013

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CHURCH STRETTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

1. Introduction and legal context

Conservation areas are defined by section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as "...areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". It is worth remarking on the precision of the words used in the Act:

- **Area.** The boundary of the area is important. Conservation area policy only applies in the designated area although the wider setting of the area may be relevant in some planning decisions. An appraisal needs to be clear why the boundary of the area has been set where it is.
- **Architectural or historic interest.** This may be one or the other, or, more commonly, both.
- **Character or appearance ... preserve or enhance.** Thus it is appropriate to consider the possibility of all four possibilities in a conservation area appraisal: preserving character or appearance and enhancing character or appearance.

The Church Stretton Conservation Area was originally designated in 1986 and extended in 2005. This appraisal has been undertaken with several issues in mind:

- Maintaining an up-to-date assessment of the character of the area.
- Reviewing the Conservation Area boundaries.
- Suggesting matters to be included in a Management Plan.

The appraisal has been carried out in accordance with English Heritage guidance¹.

There is a strong case to be made for extending the Conservation Area in several directions. The justification for this is set out in section 6 and the appraisal has been undertaken on the basis that these extensions will be designated.

1.1 The effect of conservation area status

Local Planning Authorities (LPA)² have statutory duties in relation to conservation areas³:

- To consider which parts of their area are of architectural or historic importance which it is desirable to preserve or enhance⁴.
- Designate those areas as conservation areas⁵.
- Review such areas periodically⁶.
- Maintain any designation as a local land charge⁷.
- Publicise conservation area designations⁸.
- Formulate proposals for preservation and enhancement and consult on them⁹.
- Pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area in any decisions made under the Planning Acts¹⁰.
- Give special publicity to planning applications in conservation areas¹¹.

¹ English Heritage, *Guidance on Conservation Areas Appraisals*, 2006

² The LPA commissioning this appraisal was South Shropshire District Council. Following local government reorganisation in 2009, the LPA responsible for implementing it is Shropshire Council.

³ *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*, Part II, as amended

⁴ *Ibid*, s69(1)(a)

⁵ *Ibid*, s69(1)(b)

⁶ *Ibid*, s69(2)

⁷ *Ibid*, s69(3)

⁸ *Ibid*, s70

⁹ *Ibid*, s71

¹⁰ *Ibid* s72

¹¹ *Ibid* s73



- Consider whether to make Tree Preservation Orders when works to trees in conservation areas are proposed¹².

Other consequences of conservation area status should be noted:

- Outline planning applications are not normally entertained. This is because it is not possible to “pay special attention” to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area without seeing the details of what is proposed.
- It is an offence to demolish buildings or structures in conservation areas without “conservation area consent”¹³.
- It is an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy a tree in a conservation area without having given 6 weeks’ notice to the Local Planning Authority¹⁴. During this period, the LPA may consider whether to make a Tree Preservation Order.
- Permitted Development rights are more limited than elsewhere¹⁵.
- Rights to display advertisements are more limited than elsewhere¹⁶.

2. The planning policy context

Government policy on conservation areas is contained in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹⁷. It is the advice in this document that sets the scene for all other planning policy and guidance.

The statutory development plan for the area is the Shropshire Local Development Framework. Policy CS3 of the Core Strategy, designates Church Stretton as a key centre and as such deems it suitable for balanced housing and employment development of appropriate scale and design that respects the town’s distinctive character. Church Stretton will have development that balances environmental constraints with meeting local needs.

Church Stretton is the second largest settlement in South Shropshire and contains a good range of services and facilities all of which are easily accessible to residents of the town without their needing to use a car. New development is expected to be of appropriate scale, design and quality of construction.

The circumstances in which affordable housing development may be permitted are set out in a Supplementary Planning Document¹⁸.

The conservation area policy of the Local Plan¹⁹ was replaced in April 2008 with interim policy based on PPG15:

- Plantings or re-plantings may be desirable where this would be consistent with the character and appearance of the area.

National Planning Policy Framework

¹² Town and Country Planning Act 1990, s211

¹³ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s74

¹⁴ Town and Country Planning Act 1990, s211

¹⁵ Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 as amended

¹⁶ Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements)(England) Regulations 2007

¹⁷ Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework 2011

¹⁸ Shropshire Council Core Strategy 2011

¹⁹ Type and affordability of housing SPD 2011



The NPPF has now replaced all previous National Planning Policy Guidance in the form of PPG's and PPS's. The NPPF provides national planning policy guidance on protection and enhancement of the historic environment and in particular Conservation Areas:

Para 127. When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.

Para 137. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

Para 138. Not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

The PPS5 practice guide is still the currently policy guidance alongside the NPPF.

3. Summary of special interest

A number of factors give rise to the special interest of Church Stretton Conservation Area. These are:

- It is a settlement with a long history of market and travel-related functions with a large planned expansion in the Edwardian period.
- The pattern of development broadly follows the patterns set by the ancient roads and the historic layout of residential and business curtilages and as overlain by the interventions of Edwardian and later developments.
- The discreet siting of the original settlement is greatly contrasted with the prominence of the Edwardian developments which were specifically designed to exploit the dramatic landscape possibilities of the topography.
- It has an architectural heritage spanning 10 centuries with two major periods of activity – c1595-c1640 following a 'great fire' and 1865-1914 when the town was developed as a residential resort.
- It has buildings and spaces which give it a unique character.
- Its low density of development provides some street spaces of a rural aspect very close to the centre of the town.
- It has tree cover of extraordinary quality and extent.

4. Defining the special interest

4.1 Location and setting

The small town of Church Stretton lies between the Stretton Hills and the Long Mynd about 12 miles south of the county town of Shrewsbury. In Old English the name Stretton (*stræt-tun*) means "settlement on the Roman Road" and is common in central England, with about a dozen occurrences.



The earliest documented source for the name Stretton is in 1086 (*Stratun*)²⁰. We do not know when the name was first used, but it clearly pre-dates the Domesday Survey, as the settlement is recorded in the Domesday survey as having substantial value before 1066. The first part of the name derives from the fact that it provided the church for a large parish with a number of outlying settlements. The first documentary evidence for this usage is from 1261, but other usages of the *Stretton in Stretton(s)dale* between the C13 and C18, meant that the form *Church Stretton* did not become standard until relatively recently.

The parish extends to 3,133 ha most of which lies to the south and west of the town. The topography is dramatic in which the narrow valley in which the town sits overshadowed by the broad mass of the Long Mynd to the west and the craggy outline of the Stretton Hills to the east.

The current parish population is about 4,200, about 2,800 of whom live in the town²¹. Most of the remainder live in the two main outlying settlements of All Stretton and Little Stretton with the rest spread throughout the remoter hamlets. With the decline of the agricultural workforce through the C20, the employment of Church Stretton residents changed. Today about half the adults in the parish are retired or otherwise economically inactive. 70% of the working population is professional, managerial and self-employed people. 60% of the remainder are in routine occupations such as retail with some working in the care industry and tourism. Employment in the town is limited to local shops and businesses, public services such as education and a small number of local firms. The majority of economically active residents work outside Church Stretton, with the average travel to work distance being 21km.

The underlying geology of Church Stretton is complex^{22,23} and only a broad outline is appropriate here. The rocks that make up the surrounding hills are very old, from the Precambrian period, and are highly folded. The Uriconian volcanics of the Stretton Hills are divided from Longmyndian series to the west by the substantial Church Stretton fault which runs through Shropshire from Newport to Bucknell and at Church Stretton runs through the valley floor roughly parallel to the Roman road and the railway line. There are also Cambrian and Ordovician rocks and Marine Silurian limestones in the Parish. These provide a variety of local building stones. The Stretton valley is thought to be the southern edge of glaciation in the last ice age, but this is complicated by the confluence of Cheshire plain and Welsh ice.

The soil patterns are not much simpler. In the valley bottom the soils are alluvial²⁴. Most of the remainder are brown earths some with gleying²⁵. There are calcareous soils to the east of the Stretton Hills and the soils of the Long Mynd tops are generally podzolised. The agricultural land is all of lower grades. Some of the valley floor is Grade 3. The wetter ground and flood plain land is Grade 4. All the upland is the lowest Grade 5.

The predominant land use in the parish is agriculture, although there is some broadleaf and mixed woodland. The agriculture is mixed. In 1966, more than 70% of the agricultural land was in permanent grass, with less than 23% being arable²⁶. The average farm unit size is small and stocking rates are low, reflecting the fact that a substantial portion of the parish is in the upland area of the Long Mynd. In the town, the predominant land use is residential (and at relatively low average densities) with retail and other employment uses making up most of the remainder.

²⁰ Ekwall, E, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names*, OUP, 1960

²¹ 2001 Census

²² Toghill, P, *Geology in Shropshire*, Crowwood Press, 1990

²³ Wright J.E., *The Geology of the Church Stretton Area*, HMSO, 1968

²⁴ Soil Survey of Great Britain, *Church Stretton District*, Harpenden, 1966

²⁵ Gley: fine wet clay subsoils

²⁶ Soil Survey of Great Britain, op. cit.



4.1.2 General character and plan form

Church Stretton has three main components to its character. The first is the nuclear settlement in High Street and Church Street. The second is the late Victorian and Edwardian development that gives it so much of its character today. The third is the post-war developments. Some of these have been carefully integrated into the existing urban fabric but most is in the form of housing estates of varying types and sizes. Within this fabric lie a wealth of interesting spaces, some public and some private, which add up to a townscape of some character.

The original settlement is still identifiable from its function as a market town and as a stopping place on the road from Chester to Bristol. The importance of the route was reinforced between 1472 and 1689 when Ludlow was the seat of the Council of the Marches and was thus a focal point for communication with all parts of Wales. The pattern of the buildings today still has echoes of the mediaeval burgrave plots.

The older roads to and from the town, both Roman and medieval, are still evident, although none of them retain their original significance and in places have become mere footpaths. It is arguable that each phase of the town's development has been helped by the improvements to communication: the Roman Road, the mediaeval route, the turnpikes, the railway and modern highway improvements. Each can be said to have contributed to the success of the town.

It was the existence of the railway that made the late Victorian and Edwardian development possible. At the time there was a market for substantial properties for well-heeled residents who could afford to travel to work, or not to work at all, emulating other inland resorts. The subdivision of land on the eastern and western hillsides was carried out (with a faint echo of burgrave plots) and those who could afford to build substantial properties expensively on steeply sloping sites were rewarded with the stunning views across the valley that epitomises these areas today.

4.1.3 Landscape setting

Church Stretton lies in a narrow valley, half a mile wide, between the Stretton Hills to the east and the Long Mynd to the west. The scale of the surrounding hills gives the town a strategic and picturesque position at the low pass between the North Shropshire Plain and Apedale and the Teme Valley. Sandford Avenue which runs east-west across the town represents approximately the watershed between headwaters of Quinney Brook (Teme catchment) to the south and Cound Brook (Severn catchment) to the north.

Natural England's Landscape Character Assessment²⁷ places Church Stretton in the Shropshire Hills Joint Character Area. The characteristics of this area are:²⁸

- Dominant pattern of south-west to north-east ridges, scarps and intervening valleys.
- Steep, rounded 'whaleback' hills.
- Hill tops often crowned with open moorland, with woodland on steeper slopes.
- Hill slopes with patchworks of small pasture fields, giving way to arable lands in the dales.
- Distinctive and prominent landmarks, such as the Long Mynd, Wenlock Edge, the Wrekin and Cleve peaks.
- Scattered farms in dales and sheltering valleys.
- Larger settlements confined to the Stretton Valley and the A49 corridor.
- Small fields and cottages of squatter settlements in some areas.

²⁷ Natural England, *Landscape Character Assessment*, 2002

²⁸ Ibid, *Joint Character Area 62, Shropshire Hills*, 2002



Shropshire County Council's *Shropshire Landscape Typology*²⁹ considers the landscape in more detail. Church Stretton lies on the boundaries of no fewer than four landscape types. These are the open moor of the Long Mynd, the summits and narrow valleys of the Stretton Hills, the wooded slopes of the valley and the farmland of the valley floor. These have the following characteristics:

High Open Moorland (The Long Mynd)

- Upland plateau and slopes with extensive tracts of heathland
- Largely unenclosed landscape with few signs of habitation
- Large scale landscape, offering open views
- Scattered prehistoric barrows and other earthworks
- Narrow, steep sided valleys

High Volcanic Hills and Slopes (Stretton Hills)

- Precambrian volcanic geology
- Prominent hills with notable steep slopes
- Unsettled, unenclosed landscape with few signs of habitation
- Rough grazing

Wooded Hills and Farmlands (Stretton Hills lower slopes)

- Prominent, sloping topography
- Hedged fields with predominantly ancient origins
- Large discrete woodlands with ancient character
- Mixed farming land use
- Dispersed settlement pattern
- Medium scale landscapes with framed views

Settled Pastoral Farmlands (the valley floor)

- Heavy, poorly drained soils
- Pastoral land use
- Scattered hedgerow trees
- Irregular field pattern
- Small to medium scale landscapes

The whole town, with the surrounding hills and lower landscapes lies within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty which was designated in 1959³⁰.

The narrow valley of Strettondale is more open to the plain to the north, than to landscapes to the south. From the north the lines of the hills to the east and west seem to funnel the traveller into the valley. From the south the approach is winding and indistinct in the landscape. Even so, Church Stretton is not prominent in the wider landscape. Once in the valley however, one is in no doubt as to the importance of the town in its landscape setting.

4.1.4 South Shropshire Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study

This was undertaken in 2008 in relation to the production of the Shropshire Local Development Framework³¹. Its purpose was to assess, in landscape terms, the sensitivity of potential development sites. Nine sites were assessed in the Church Stretton area. Of these only sites SSSC1 (land to the west of Trevor Hill) and SSSC5 (land to the north of Sandford Avenue) lie within the proposed

²⁹ Shropshire County Council, *Shropshire Landscape Typology*, 2006

³⁰ AONB Management Plan

³¹ White Consultants, *South Shropshire Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study*, 2008



Conservation Area boundary. These were assessed as having medium to high sensitivity and low capacity for development (medium in the case of site SSCS5 immediately in the vicinity of The Leasowes).

4.2 Historic development and archaeology

4.2.1 The origins and historic development of the area

The pre-historic archaeology of the Long Mynd and the hills to the east is extensive. Bronze Age remains include defensive cross-ridge dykes, lychets, field systems, enclosures and barrows. There is an important Neolithic settlement on Caer Caradoc to the east of the town with its associated roads, field systems and other monuments. It is clear that the landscape was well inhabited long before the construction of the Roman Road or the arrival of the Saxons.

The Roman road from Viroconium (Wroxeter) to Magnis (Kenchester) was of some significance. It uses the natural gap in the hills that Strettondale provides. There is little evidence of Roman occupation of the valley other than the road itself and some scattered finds. Indeed the few known sites of importance at Leintwardine, Newington (Craven Arms) and Acton Scott would seem to indicate little urbanisation of the Stretton valley.

Like the Romans before them, the Saxons made use of existing physical and social infrastructure. They often settled along Roman roads and Church Stretton is a good example of this. We have no idea of the origins or development of Saxon Stretton. It was clearly not of the importance of Stottesdon, Stoke St. Milborough, Lydbury North, Stanton Lacy or Bromfield all of which had minster churches. However Domesday records it as having a church, a mill, nearly 1,000 acres of farmland and the not inconsiderable annual value of £13. More importantly perhaps, its strategic significance was recognised in that it was a demesne holding³² both before and after the Conquest. The location of the Saxon settlement is not known. The church is located some way from the Roman road. If this is, as seems likely, the site of the Saxon church, then it is probable that the village was established not on the Roman road as normally was the case but more than a quarter of a mile away between the church and the Old Rectory. This siting may have been favoured for its water supply (the town brook), its better strategic position and lower propensity to flood.

The Normans clearly regarded Church Stretton as an important strategic site. In the C12 a new church was built (the nave of which survives today), a castle (Brocards or Brockhurst Castle) was built on the natural mound to the south of the town and, probably, the burgage plots of the town were laid out. By the early C13 the town had a market charter and the church had been enlarged in the Early English style. But by mid-century the strategic significance of the town had declined and the castle had been abandoned.

Church Stretton appears to have had a largely uneventful history. The town was razed by a fire in 1593 which means little survival of fabric from before that date. The mediaeval plan form survives with encroachments into the market place, a feature occurring in many mediaeval towns. There were market halls in The Square. The timber-framed one built in 1617, possibly replacing an earlier one destroyed in the fire, was itself replaced in 1840 with one which lasted until 1963.

³²

A direct holding of the Earl, and not tenanted.



The coming of the railway in 1852, led to the idea that the town might be developed as a resort or even a spa. The Hotel in High Street was built in 1865 and the Hydro³³ in 1902. It was only in 1898-99 with the establishment of land and development companies, that the new developments progressed at any speed. The first 10 years of C20 were the heyday of Church Stretton, with large amounts of development taking place. But after the First World War, demand dropped, not to be fully revived until the 1970s.

4.2.2 Archaeology and ancient monuments

Whilst the archaeology of the area is rich, there are no scheduled ancient monuments in the Church Stretton Conservation Area.

4.3 Spatial analysis

4.3.1 The character and interrelationship of spaces within the area

The spaces in the Conservation Area are all connected by the linearity of the streets. Some of them are large and some small; some are green spaces and some are street spaces; some are both; some are public domain, some private and some mixed. The most important spaces are:

- **The Square.** This focus of the town as a market for which it is still used. It is nicely enclosed by the surrounding buildings but is somewhat spoilt by its use as car parking on non-market days.



There are views out of The Square not only up and down High Street but also along Churchway and through several entrances to back burgages on the eastern side.

- **St. Lawrence's churchyard** is a very subtle and interesting element of Church Stretton's townscape. The churchyard measures approximately 50m x 55m which is about 10 x 11 perches. It is tempting to believe that this survives intact from the mediaeval burgaging. Whether or not this is the case the laying out of the churchyard bears little relation to the position and orientation of the church which, for this relationship, must surely pre-date it. The result of this is the accidental creation of some fine internal spaces: narrow and street orientated to the west, open to the south-east and with elements to the north side of the church leading the eye through the narrow gap to The Square. It is enclosed by stone walls of 1798.

³³

Now the Long Mynd Hotel



- **The cemetery.** This is an irregular quadrilateral but its internal layout, walls and formal gate at the end of Church Street nevertheless give it a formal character. Its greenness and its position immediately beyond the limits of the mediaeval town mark a distinct transition between this and the Edwardian and later development beyond.
- **War Memorial gardens.** This space is irregularly shaped and forms a visual whole with the wide expanse of the Brook Street section of Burway Road rather than with Rectory Field from which it is separated by a high stone wall. The summit to the north of the War Memorial forms a rocky promontory which may originally have been considered part of the natural defences of the location. The extent of it seems to have been dictated entirely by its topography which gives it a unity of character and fine views over the town. The lower areas of this space are characterised by highway spaces. These have a tendency to be dominated by vehicular uses.



- **Lime Walk.** This is a short pedestrian link between Longhills Road and Carding Mill Valley lined with lime trees. Halfway along it crosses the stream which runs down the valley bottom.





- **The Park.** This was formally laid out in the Edwardian period and somewhat truncated with the construction of the bypass in 1937. The ambience is somewhat spoilt by the volume of traffic on the nearby A49 and railway. The facilities are however beautifully maintained in a way that allows it to retain its Edwardian feel.
- **Sandford Avenue and Watling Street.** The space at this junction is visually interesting although dominated by traffic. The Edwardian improved line of Sandford Avenue crosses Watling Street at 45° angle, retaining at this point not only the old line of Hazler Road but also the general dimensions of the space. Travelling through it, whether on foot or in a vehicle, involves deviation from straight lines because of the layout of the carriageways and the footpaths. This space incorporates visually the green highway margins at the junction of Sandford Avenue and the A49 and some of the adjacent private gardens.



- **Trevor Hill incline.** When Trevor Hill was laid out it necessitated creating a steeply rising access with hairpin bends. This has created an interesting piece of townscape which is further defined by the placement of Arden House and other properties.



Townscape sequences

The interrelationship between the spaces in the Conservation Area is now dealt with by describing the 10 principal townscape sequences. There are other sequences which, while not without their character, do not merit detailed description. These include those with lesser architectural merit (such as Longhills Road) and those which are short (such as Churchway). The experience of townscape sequence depends on the use made of them by individuals involved. The opportunities for the many possible variations in Church Stretton give the Conservation Area much of its charm.



Sequence 1. This is the sequence northwards along **High Street** to its junction with Sandford Avenue. Tudor Cottage, on the right, makes a suitably emphatic start to the most important townscape sequence in the town. This is immediately followed by an introduction to the narrow, urbanised feel of the street created by the cottages on the corner of Cunnery Road and the United Reformed Church opposite.

More space was acquired in the street when the Silvester Horne Institute was built in 1916 but the narrowness resumes at 60 High Street which may (deduced from plans) have been the original start of



the wide mediaeval market place. At the King's Arms there are glimpses through the urban fabric on both sides of the street which continues narrow as far as the Buck's Head.



Here the space in the street loses its coherence owing to the intrusion of Lion Meadow and its associated car parks. At 23 High Street the street reaches its narrowest point before bursting into the relative space of The Square. In fact this is not a large space and would have provided a continuation of the constrained character for the long period (1617-1963) when it was occupied by a market hall.



There are views from The Square into Churchway and through several gaps in the fabric into confined burgage plots on the right. 17 High Street adds to the character through its architectural quality. For a short distance the street resumes its narrowness until the relative openness of the junction with Sandford Avenue and Burway Road.



In reverse sequence, arrival in The Square is less contrasted and there is an emerging townscape view as the bend in the street leads the eye along the Ludlow Road.



Sequence 2. This is the sequence northwards along **Church Street**. At the southern end the cemetery gives the street a very open feel. The cottages on the right, with their front walls may give an echo of the historic density of the built-up area. Church Street was considerably widened in the C19 and the feeling throughout is one of space when compared to the more restricted spaces of High Street. The cottages beyond the library (the former National School) are built up to the road, although old maps do not indicate building on the rear of burgages on the scale of that in many towns. This serves to accentuate the open feel of the space outside the library. The relative spaciousness of the churchyard is also accentuated by the position and orientation of the church within it. The angle of the church within its rectilinear churchyard and the grain of the burgages give the space variety and charm.



The wall of the churchyard delineates the uses but is not high enough to impose on the feeling of space in the street. Beyond Churchway, which gives a narrowing glimpse of The Square, the street becomes restricted by walls. These draw attention to the rising greenness of the War Memorial gardens beyond which the sequence finally leads. In reverse, the sequence is also interesting. The



gradual narrowing of the street progresses to the subtlety of the spaces around the church. The view of the cemetery at the far end of the street, with its gate as focus, gradually becomes apparent as the vista becomes ever more open.



Sequence 3. This starts at the reservoir at **Carding Mill Valley** and ends at the junction of Burway Road and **High Street**. It is interesting because it quite unusually provides an approach to the town that at times shows no sign of development and retains something of the feel of the pre-C19 approach to the town. The reservoir is in a side valley on the south side of Carding Mill Valley proper. The track descends quite quickly to the valley floor to join Mott's Road.



This is an ancient routeway, which, like all of those cutting across the northeast to southwest grain of the geology, was never better than a packhorse road. It joined the Portway, part of the drovers' network of the Marches and may have formed part of a chain of similar roads across the hills to Welshpool and beyond. Here there is a widening of the valley where the remains of the water management systems for the mill may be observed. Where the upper car park now is, there was once an open-air swimming pool. From the ford there is evidence of the settled fabric of the mill community.





The largest building is the former mill itself, this and the house opposite form a constriction in the space which is of stark contrast to the spaces that precede and follow it. The house and others in the vicinity, exhibit the random distribution of workplaces and cottages which was common in the South Shropshire landscape in the mining period. Whilst the rustic qualities of these buildings has been lost in subsequent alteration, extension and rebuilding, their distribution contrasts strongly with the formal mediaeval and Edwardian layouts of the town.



The visual containment is continued with the National Trust offices in the narrowest part of the valley after which the scene opens up again. A fold in the hillside obscures the town from this viewpoint and this does not emerge again until this is passed. The sequence follows the historic road (now just a track) upward to join Burway Road. Whilst there are some dramatically placed properties in the valley bottom at the edge of the town, the sequence continues with a gradual introduction to the built fabric of the town on one side only – in this case on the left and topographically lower than the road. The precipitous road over the Long Mynd joins a cattle grid which announces the start of the town proper. Immediately the sequence enters a familiar Church Stretton space: a tree-lined street with Edwardian and later houses all set well back from the road.



Halfway down the straight stretch on the left is a hedge that adds to the character as does a large oak tree. About 230m from the cattle grid the street widens into an ambiguous space. The road bears downhill to the right now bounded on the right with a strong sequence of walls. Here the eye is drawn upward along the straight route (a footpath) which passes behind the summit of the War Memorial gardens to Longhills Road. For the next 200m the space is narrow, echoing its ancient origins, flanked by the wall on the right and the steep sides of the gardens on the left.



The right hand side continues to be contained by the wall of the grounds of the old Rectory, now the wall to Rectory Gardens and Rectory Field, while the steep slope on the left gradually reduces to meet the level of the street. The openness of the space here is added to as the sequence turns into the lower part of Burway Road which was formerly known as Brook Street. The buildings on the left are of townscape significance. Those on the right are not. In reverse the experience is similar but at the cattle grid and beyond the gradual opening of the vista is dramatic and beyond the former mill the progression into truly wild country is unusual for this part of England.

Sequence 4. This sequence runs down **Sandford Avenue** from the top of Hazler Hill to its junction with High Street. This is perhaps the least coherent of the townscape sequences because of its inconsistent character and the visual interruptions that it suffers. Nevertheless, it is one experienced daily by many people. Starting from the boundary stone as in sequence 5, the character is altogether different. It has all the hallmarks of a considered new approach to a town. The alignment is fairly straight, the gradient is steady and the avenue of trees maintains all of the character intended when it was originally planted by Dr Sandford in 1884. It follows roughly the centre line of 5 parcels of land that were made available for its construction and the layout of development that became possible on each side. For the first 700m or so this character doesn't become fully apparent as the road swings gradually, in two bends 400m apart, into the alignment that runs straight down into the town. Up to the first bend the road margins are wide and have plenty of tree cover. On the left there are about 10 houses at very low density sitting above the road level.



There is woodland on the right and one substantial house, The Leasowes. After the second bend, at the entrance to White House Gardens there is a less linear space with a more urban feel to it and views across the valley to the left. The avenue that follows is of very even character. The trees are well distributed but not evenly spaced. The houses are of similar size, mostly of the same Edwardian period, all set back, but not in a linear way, from their frontages.



Given the wide variety of plot utilisation in other Stretton streets, it seems likely that the layout was decreed by those who planned it. The whole is of a uniform and pleasing character with many fine forest and ornamental trees. The street bends to the left about 75m before it crosses the line of the Roman road, although the modern road junctions have been engineered so as not to oppose one another. The space here is visually interesting but lacking in active usage (despite some attempt to promote it) because of the detrimental impact of traffic at these intersections and the major one at the A49.



The disruption of this sequence and the other intrusive effect of the A49 are discussed elsewhere³⁴ and there is little that can be said to downplay this. Across the A49 Sandford Avenue continues with an altogether different character. The arch of the railway bridge is like a threshold after which one is presented with good quality townscape on the left hand side and less good quality on the right.

³⁴

Paragraph 4.4.11



This is by way of historical accident. The majority of plots on the north side remained undeveloped until the post-war period. The space at the end of Churchill Road, which formed the access to the original station does not live up to expectations because of the poor townscape quality of the public buildings adjacent which, consequently, are not included in the Conservation Area. Sandford Court, beyond, is included because of the enlarged and well defined space it creates on Sandford Avenue. The corner of Beaumont Road is an interesting urban space.



The street is well enclosed by the wall on the right that follows and the space behind the wall contributes to the sense of space in the street as a whole. But the poor townscape quality created by the backs of the neighbouring development, regardless of its well-mannered screening, excludes this area from the Conservation Area. The last stretch to the junction with High Street is good quality town centre townscape, with major buildings on three of the four corners and buildings of historic interest on the fourth. In reverse the sequence is similar. The rise of the bridge over the railway provides a useful screen for the A49 from the town centre, but this only serves to emphasise it when that point in the sequence is reached. The sequence at the top end of Sandford Avenue is as emphatic a statement of departure as the reverse is of arrival in the town.





Sequence 5. Hazler Road. This starts at the same point as Sequence 4. From the boundary stone there is little to indicate that the relatively narrow opening to the west would provide such a different townscape interest to that of Sandford Avenue. The first 100m is characterised by country hedges. On the left, as the street rises slightly, is Hazler Hill Farm set well back from the road, while on the right there are modern houses, some behind hedges.



As the road begins to descend towards the town the character changes abruptly. The sunken nature of the street, and its less well defined margins makes one aware of its ancient origins. Two older properties of stone, first one on the left and then one on the right, before and after a distinct bend, serve to emphasise this.



Just beyond this point the modern entrances to Windle Hill and Westfields create a more open space which will over time mature to quite a pleasant one. There are then walls on the left, where the land is higher, hedges on both sides and four substantial trees all of which add to the sense of enclosure. West of the entrance to Caradoc Drive, the layout becomes more Edwardian with larger houses of that period in evidence. The parallel access of Hazler Drive creates a more open feel before the street is again enclosed by hedges.



Beyond this, on the right, is a modern house of some quality. West of Hazler Crescent, Hazler Road becomes visually restricted by banks on both sides, retaining its rural feel. This is followed by a sudden emergence into Sandford Avenue and Sequence 4. This junction is made slightly



uncomfortable by the obvious insertion of the new street into the historic layout by the Victorian engineers but the entrance to Hazler Road is as inconspicuous as that at its east end. In reverse the sequence has similar qualities. Its emergence at its east end onto the busy Wenlock Road contrasts with its rural character.



Sequence 6. Trevor Hill is the shortest of the sequences. At the top end of Trevor Hill there are plots of the original Edwardian layout yet undeveloped. These now fall outside the development boundary of the town and the Conservation Area. The sense here is one of openness with open woodland on the right and long views to the Stretton Hills between the houses on the eastern side. After the access to the golf club, the street is suddenly enclosed by fences and hedges.



After a short distance the open feel returns. The houses here are large and the large plots are flatter than in Madeira Walk and Cunnery Road allowing more conventional garden layouts. The view straight along the road is over the roofs of Arden House. There are also views to the east between houses on the left, and the sharp hairpin bends that lead down to Carding Mill Valley are not apparent until they are reached.



Here suddenly there is a sense of enclosure through the steepness of the land and the retaining walls on the right. At the second bend there are views to Burway Road and the rising lower slopes of the Long Mynd. Trevor Hill finally ends in the space described in the section above. In reverse the sequence presents doubt as the street divides twice before its end. At the far end, as in Sequences 7, 8 and 9, the sequence dissolves into the countryside by becoming a footpath.



Sequence 7. Madeira Walk is an interesting road on the western side of the town. Its original concept of plots on very steeply sloping sites was clearly a difficult one for Edwardian architects, engineers and prospective purchasers, as many of the plots were left undeveloped until fairly recently. From its start, at the north end of the Conservation Area, the layout is almost entirely of houses above the road (often well above) on the right and below the road (often well below) on the left. Some of the land on the left forms the rear gardens of the larger properties on Shrewsbury Road. From the start there are some wide views across the valley to the Stretton Hills after which the sense of comparative openness closes in with substantial planting on the left.



A slight bend to the right gives a long view along the street to the south and the open and closed aspect alternate for most of the rest of its length with some long views from the more open parts. At Hill House a battered concave brick retaining wall on the right creates a small enclosure pleasing enough to be suitable for a public seat. As the sequence descends to Carding Mill Valley the long wall



of Arden House is visually dominant. The junction with Carding Mill Valley is described as a space above. The reverse sequence is similar but retains a mysterious lack of focus beyond the Conservation Area boundary as the road gradually reduces to the status of a footpath.



Sequence 8. Cunnery Road has an altogether different feel to the other Edwardian sequences because of the amount of open space at its upper end and its winding course before it arrives at High Street. Starting at the forest gate at the far end of the street, there is a feeling of a country estate. Beyond the gate were building plots proposed by the Stretton Land and Building Companies which were never developed and now form a substantial woodland backdrop to the town. There is enclosure on the north side of the street with hedges and walls after which a bend to the right reveals an open area at the entrance to the Long Mynd Hotel. The area is dominated by trees in Old Rectory Wood, Allen Coppice and the open spaces in between, and there are some fine specimens here.





Cunnery Road begins to descend through a bend to the left heavily planted on the left hand side. As in Trevor Hill and Madeira Walk, the larger properties are on the left, with some being considerably above the road. There are intermittent views through the trees to the lower parts of the town and the Stretton Hills beyond. There is a sense of openness at the hairpin bend that follows with views to Rectory Field, Burway Road and Bodbury Hill beyond.



The street descends rapidly here, too steep for frontages which start again at the drive to Woodcote. But here there are also townscape and landscape views to the east and south-east. The openness of the cemetery on the right is contrasted by the ever-increasing density of the houses on the left broken only by the entrance to Church Street and Sequence 2. This culminates with the townscape prominence of the buildings on the corner of High Street and the start of Sequence 1. The reverse sequence has a definite climax at the entrance to the Long Mynd Hotel, such is the visual strength of the space here with its views into the open spaces beyond.



Sequence 9. Clive Avenue. Clive Avenue is a wide road by Church Stretton standards with little contrast in its sense of enclosure. At the top of the street the architecture is quite ordinary but there is a sense of openness with striking views to the north-west. At junction of Kenyon Road the feel is one of enclosure although the houses are actually more widely spaced here.



There is a short view down the road to a left hand bend, the first of 3 bends which give the road much interest. From this point the unadopted road is enclosed on the left by the long wall over Overdale. This leads the eye around the second bend which gently leads right and is punctuated with four substantial oak trees.



The eye is tempted by the third bend, again to the left at the junction with Ragleth Road. The modern developments in Ragleth Road and beyond do not impinge much on the visual qualities of the Conservation Area in Clive Avenue. From the junction with Ragleth Road the feeling is one of linearity and, suddenly, connection with the rest of the town as the Methodist Church comes into view. In reverse, the sequence is similar but with a sense of anti-climax at the south end with the relative openness of the area. The track down to the A49, while passable with care, is not included in this sequence.



Sequence 10. Watling Street has, at its south end, a visually ill-defined starting point, the open area created by its merging (at an angle of less than 10°) with the A49. The traffic engineering at this point makes the space rather uncomfortable. But the eye is immediately drawn to the imposing red-brick terrace, the 'Railway Houses', which set the scene for the striking linearity of the street. The eye is led neatly into the longest single stretch of the street whose Roman straightness seems at odds with its relative quiet. The houses vary quite a lot in period with a concentration of older ones in the central section, but their sizes are less varied than in some other roads. The very slight variations of



alignment give a feeling of linearity broken only slightly by a slight opening up of the space where the footpath from Clive Avenue to the town centre crosses. Beyond this point views into the section beyond Crossways begin to emerge.



The junction with Crossways is an interesting space. It is dominated by the two larger structures: The Sandford and the Methodist Church. There is a nice long view down Crossways to the town centre and beyond and tantalising short ones to the starts of Clive Avenue, Snatchfields and Hazler Crescent. The next section of Watling Street has a far less linear character. It forms part of an area of Edwardian housing that includes Hazler Crescent. This area has architecturally the most consistent Edwardian character in the whole town with very little later development obvious. Hazler Crescent, while not worthy of a sequence of its own, is surely worth a detour. In Watling Street, the large houses on the south-east side, set back in their spacious gardens contrast with the smaller houses on the north-west side. These were developed on narrower plots as part of the Crossways development and, while actually detached, are close to the road and close enough together to give an impression of being a terrace. The junction with Sandford Avenue is visually an interesting oblique one with connections to the open spaces at the junction of the A49 with Sandford Avenue.



The space is made a little uncomfortable by the traffic engineering which cause the eye to be led away from the linearity of the Roman Road which continues north-east of Sandford Avenue. Here Watling Street (North as it is now known) is suddenly reduced to a country lane with the marked enclosure being created almost entirely by roadside planting. Here most of the houses are large and in large grounds and the urban feel is rapidly lost as the natural path veers eastwards along Cwms Lane. In reverse sequence the experience is similar until the junction with A49 begins to become apparent. From this point the sequence has little to anticipate and no visual stop or unexpected climax.



4.3.2 Key views and vistas

It is difficult to catalogue key views in Church Stretton because the topography provides so many. Some important view locations are described in the townscape sequences³⁵. These and other views of note are shown on the plans.

4.4 Character analysis

4.4.1 Activity and uses influencing plan form and buildings

The plan form of Church Stretton as a whole has been strongly influenced by transportation patterns. The line of the Roman Road, and its echoes, the A49 and the railway all follow parallel straight and strong lines through the valley generally bypassing the strategically insignificant other settlements. The mediaeval route, Shrewsbury Road and Ludlow Road, follows a less direct route through other settlements. It is notable that all the old inns and hotels are arranged along this road. Because its status as a trunk road was transferred to the bypass when it was finally opened in the late 1940s, it has a quieter aspect than similar roads in many other towns and villages. The early east-west roads, Hazler Road, Burway Road and Cwms Lane have all been reduced in significance by later more convenient routes which with more rapid modes of travel avoid the need for the arduous hill-climbs involved.

Land uses in the historic core clearly set the framework for the grain of the town that is evident today. Burgage plots running east-west with a wide market street later encroached upon. As a general rule these uses have been retained, although there is some disruption through modern development.

Most of the rest of the conservation area is characterised by high-status suburban developments of the early C20, or, at least, planning for this. Parts of this are arranged along previously existing roads such as Shrewsbury Road, Burway Road, Watling Street and Hazler Road. Other parts were developed off new roads such as Cunners Road, Trevor Hill, Madiera Walk, Sandford Avenue and Clive Avenue. In all these cases the variety of plot sizes, the imagination of their architects and original owners, their degree of slope, and the sheer practicality and economics of building on some of them resulted in an enormous variety of houses.

The original plan for Crossways was to establish a new town centre near the station. The commercial impetus for this evaporated after 1914 and the only range that was built (on the corner of Crossways and Sandford Avenue) was subsequently demolished for highway improvements. Nevertheless, the original plot layout is still evident in part on the east side, and on the west side of Watling Street.

³⁵

Paragraph 4.3.1

The Stretton Land Company's layout on the western side included plots in Trevor Hill and Cunnery Road that were never developed, whether through lack of demand or engineering difficulty or both. These plots have subsequently naturally regenerated as the woods we see today. This has a major impact on the appearance of the Conservation Area in any views looking west.

4.4.3 The quality of buildings and their contribution to the area

Only a small percentage of the buildings in the Conservation Area are of a notable quality. These are listed in the sections that follow. The rest are of little individual architectural or historic consequence but many contribute to the special character of the Conservation Area through their distribution, massing and variety.

4.4.4 Listed buildings

- Brook Cottage, 4 Burway Road, house, 1733, roughcast and stone, plain tiles (483677)³⁶
- 8 Burway Road, house, C17 core, restored C18, roughcast, plain tiles (483678)
- Burway House, house, former free school, early C19 rebuild of earlier core, painted brick and stone rubble, slates (483679)
- Scotsman's Field, Burway Road, by *Ernest Newton* 1908, roughcast, plain tiles, (483680)
- West House, the Old Rectory House, and the Old Rectory Cottage, Burway Road, (former rectory) early C19, incorporating earlier structure, painted render and brick, slates, (483681)
- The Priory, 29 Church Street, house, 1832, red brick with stone and brick dressings, plain tiles, Gothick style, (483682)
- Church of St. Lawrence, C12 nave, C13 transepts, crossing, chancel, tower C15, additions and restorations 1831, 1868, 1882, 1932, rubblestone and ashlar, plain tiles, Grade I, (483685)
- Churchyard wall, styles and gates, late C18, rubble with ashlar copings, (483686)
- 41 Church Street, house, early C19, render, plain tiles, (483683)
- 43 and 45 Church Street, house now 2 houses, early C19, roughcast, slate and tiles, (483684)
- 10 and 12 Cunnery Road, pair of houses, 1899-1900, *Parker and Unwin*, render, plain tiles, (483699)
- 13 and 15 High Street, shops, formerly The Lion PH, C17, altered C19, timber frame and roughcast, plain tiles (483700)
- 17 High Street, house, sometime hotel, early C18, brick, stone dressings, plain tiles, Grade II*, (483701)
- 24 High Street, inn now cafe, early C17 core with C19 and C20 alterations, timber frame, brick infill, plain tiles, (483702)
- Old Barn, 43 High Street, barn, C17 converted to shop 1970s, timber frame on stone rubble plinth, roughcast, plain tiles (483703)
- 49 and 49A High Street, former coach house to 51 High Street, now shops, C17 restored C20, timber frame, brick infill, plain tiles, (483705)
- Insurance House, 51 High Street, house, now offices, late C18, roughcast, plain tiles, (483706)
- Kings Arms, 53 High Street, public house, C17, timber frame, roughcast, plain tiles, (483707)
- 54 and 56 High Street, house and shop, C17 with C19 and C20 alterations, stone rubble, plain tiles, (483708)
- 57 High Street, shop, early C19 with earlier core, roughcast, plain tiles, (483609)
- 59 High Street, house, now restaurant, C18, painted brick, plain tiles, (483710)
- 61 High Street, house, now shop, C18, painted brick, plain tiles (483711)
- 63 High Street, house, now shop, C18, painted brick, plain tiles (483712)
- 65 High Street, house, formerly Queen's Head Inn, C18, painted brick, plain tiles (483713)

³⁶ Numerical references are to the Images of England index on the English Heritage website which includes a picture and listing description of each. Buildings are Grade II unless stated. Churchyard monuments etc. are not included here but are included in Images of England.

- 69 High Street, house, C17 with C18 alterations, brick with stone dressings, plain tiles, (not shown)
- Somershey, 71 High Street, house, early C19, brick, slate, railings (483714)
- Ragleth House, 73 High Street, house, late C18 with late C19 frontage, red brick, roughcast, plain tiles, (483715)
- Ashford House, High Street, house, early C19, red brick, render, plain tiles, (483716)
- Buck's Head Public House, High Street, Manor House now public house, late C16 or early C17, C17, C19, C29 extensions and alterations, red brick, stone dressings, plain tiles, (483717)
- Tudor Cottage, High Street, house, late C16 with C17 alterations, remodelled late C18, timber frame, brick infill, stone side and rear walls, plain tiles, (483718)
- 2 The Square, house, C18 with C19 and C29 alterations, roughcast, plain tiles, (483720)
- 3 The Square, house and office, late C18 with C19 alterations, roughcast, plain tiles, (483721)

4.4.5 Unlisted buildings

Apart from those already listed, few buildings in Church Stretton are suitable for listing. Ones that might be considered suitable are:

- Woodcote by *Parker and Unwin*, 1900. This is presumably not listed because it has been subjected to a number of alterations, not least the loss of its original thatch.
- Overdale, Clive Avenue c1903. This is one of the best of the Church Stretton mansions with plenty of architectural bravura and extensive formal gardens.
- The Library (former National School) 1861 by *S. Pountney Smith*.

Because of the general scale of building in the period between 1900 and 1914, there are many buildings which are of townscape significance. These are shown on a plan. The most significant of them are listed here.

- The Silvester Horne Institute, by *P. Morey Horder*, 1916³⁷
- United Reformed Church, High Street, by *Joseph Bratton*, 1866
- Methodist Church, Watling Street, 1906³⁸
- Former Railway Station by *T.M. Penson*, c1852³⁹
- Former Power Station, Crossways⁴⁰
- The Maltings, Sandford Avenue and Easthope Road, C19⁴¹
- The Hotel, Sandford Avenue and Shrewsbury Road, 1865 and later⁴²
- Barclays Bank, Sandford Avenue, by Cossins, Peacock and Bewlay, 1908⁴³
- Lloyds Bank, High Street and Sandford Avenue⁴⁴
- HSBC Bank, High Street and Burway Road⁴⁵
- The Rowans, Burway Road⁴⁶

³⁷ Photo CS20
³⁸ Photo CS112
³⁹ Photo CS119
⁴⁰ Photo CS120
⁴¹ Photo CS121
⁴² Photo CS27
⁴³ Photo CS69
⁴⁴ Photo CS70
⁴⁵ Photo CS70
⁴⁶ Photo CS46

- Longmynd Hotel, Cunnery Road, 1902, but much altered⁴⁷
- Tiger Hall, Cunnery Road
- The Sandford, Watling Street⁴⁸
- Arden House, Carding Mill Valley⁴⁹
- The Sycamores, Carding Mill Valley
- Beam House, Madeira Walk
- Obiri House, Madeira Walk
- The Lodge, Madeira Walk
- Stanyeld, Stanyeld Road
- The Leaseowes, Sandford Avenue⁵⁰
- Foxlease Cottage, Hazler Road⁵¹
- Hill View, Hazler Road⁵²
- Hazler Crescent⁵³
- Mynd Court, Longhills Road, 1905

4.4.6 Local details

The prevailing detailing of the built fabric of Church Stretton is typical of the relevant period. There is little that is unique to the area. There is much remaining characteristic detailing in the timber framed buildings of the early C17. There is little quality Georgian brickwork. The Edwardian detailing generally follows the generic fashion of the time rather than any local Church Stretton practice.

4.4.7 Building materials

As is typical for South Shropshire the use of materials prior to the coming of the railway in 1852 is predominantly local. There are several local stones in evidence. The Silurian rubble, which is easy to work, is in evidence in boundary walls and plinths and in some lesser buildings. The harder stones of the volcanic beds and some Shropshire sandstones are in evidence in ashlar work.

The local clays produce a soft red brick. This may be seen in some of the older buildings, but in many it has been painted, whether for reasons of weatherproofing or fashion. Most of the older buildings have plain tiled roofs. Timber framing is invariably in the traditional oak. Infill is either the original or restored roughcast or brick of a later period.

From the 1860s, however, materials began to be imported from elsewhere. The architectural school of Norman Shaw and his followers demanded a mixture of red brick and render often as infill to timber framing whether structural or otherwise. The bricks are often from Ruabon or Staffordshire as these harder bricks were needed for the structural stability of the new larger houses as well as for their smooth appearance and acid resistance. At this period roofs were sometimes slate, but plain tiles were also used where the arts and crafts influence on the architecture was strong. In this connection Woodcote was originally thatch but this was replaced subsequently with plain tiles. Plain tiles were a feature of Arts and Crafts influenced architecture and they feature strongly in the Edwardian suburbs of Church Stretton. As a result a minority of buildings have slate roofs.

4.4.8 Public realm

⁴⁷ Photo CS105
⁴⁸ Photo CS122
⁴⁹ Photo CS16
⁵⁰ Photo CS57
⁵¹ Photo CS74
⁵² Photo CS75
⁵³ Photo CS116

The public realm is generally in good condition and well-maintained. There is a distinct absence of self-conscious townscape “improvements”. There are, however, issues to be considered in any long-term management of the Conservation Area⁵⁴.

4.4.9 Green spaces

A review of the green spaces of the Church Stretton Conservation Area must surely begin with a description of the green spaces outside it. The steep sides of the valley are predominantly wooded. Whilst much of this woodland is privately owned, there are public rights of way and permissive routes through it. Above and beyond the wooded slopes lie the vast expanse of Ashlet and Bodbury Hill with the Long Mynd behind and the lesser masses of the Stretton Hills to the east. These have an enormous impact of the setting of the Conservation Area.

Much of the valley floor has never been developed mainly due to its susceptibility to flooding. This means that the C19 and C20 developments on either side face each other across a valley with much open land in it. Again, much of this land is privately owned but its impact on the setting of the Conservation Area is considerable.

Also outside the Conservation Area are Rectory Field and Wood⁵⁵. These were laid out in the 1830s and are now areas of considerable maturity having a major impact on the character of those parts of the Conservation Area that adjoin it.

Within the Conservation Area, the following green spaces are of importance. They are described in the section on spatial analysis⁵⁶:

- St Lawrence’s Churchyard⁵⁷
- The cemetery⁵⁸
- The War Memorial gardens⁵⁹
- The Park⁶⁰
- The open space on the east side of the A49 opposite the park⁶¹

The areas originally laid out by the Stretton Land Company while spacious in their use of private space, and sometime in the width of the road, are conspicuously lacking in any public spaces. There are a small number of other public green spaces that have also been included within the Conservation Area boundary.

The greatest contribution to the greenness of Church Stretton comes from its extensive tree cover. This has 4 main origins:

- Trees surviving from before 1850. There are many examples of these. They were often hedgerow trees that were retained in the later developments. Others survive in Rectory Field and Rectory Wood.
- Trees planted as part of the formal laying out of the town. These include avenues trees in both sections of Sandford Avenue.

⁵⁴ Paragraph 4.4.14
⁵⁵ Photo CS123
⁵⁶ See section 4.3.1
⁵⁷ Photo CS4
⁵⁸ Photo CS6
⁵⁹ Photos CS7, CS9
⁶⁰ Photo CS13
⁶¹ Photo CS15



- Specimen planting by the first and subsequent occupiers of the Edwardian Villas. Many of the original owners had the space, resources and foresight to plant both forest and ornamental specimens.
- Naturally regenerated woodland on those parts of the Stretton Land Company's estate that were never developed.

Many of the trees are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. Good advice is given in the Town Design Guide⁶².

4.4.10 Intrusion and damage

There are a few examples of intrusion and visual damage in the conservation area. These are:

- Many of the buildings in the Crossways area. This area has been included for its historic interest and potential for improving the Conservation Area and the linkages between its other parts. With the recent construction of Village Pointe the south-east quadrant of Crossways is now relatively coherent in townscape terms⁶³. The north east quadrant is less so mainly because frontage activity facing the A49 is weak. Despite the presence of the former power station, a simple and modest brick building, the western portion is poor in townscape terms⁶⁴.
- Buildings on the south side of Burway Road between Church Street and High Street⁶⁵.
- The junction of High Street and Lion Meadow. The setting of The Buck's Head and High Street as a whole is marred by this⁶⁶. If a way could be found to restrict access to Lion Meadow from High Street for large vehicles the geometry of the junction might be changed to allow the frontages to be built up to once again. The increase in land values might pay for the necessary highway works.

4.4.11 Neutral areas

There are no areas considered to be neutral areas.

4.4.12 General condition

The general condition of the buildings and boundary treatments in the Conservation Area is considered to be good although there is a very small number of exceptions.

4.4.13 Problems, pressures and capacity for change

The Conservation Area is vulnerable to change in a number of ways:

- The low density of much of the Edwardian development gives the curtilages of many houses a greater value than the houses themselves. When combined with the inability and unwillingness of modern householders to maintain large gardens, this inevitably will give rise to continued pressure for development.

⁶² Church Stretton Town Design Guide, 2007, Appendix 1

⁶³ Photo CS124

⁶⁴ Photo CS120

⁶⁵ Photo CS8

⁶⁶ Photo CS125



- Because of the low residential density of the town and the daily influx of employees of the various shops and businesses, the town suffers from traffic and parking pressures that are already beyond capacity. Measures to promote alternative means of transport, more controlled traffic and parking management and alternative parking arrangements should be investigated.
- The few areas of poor quality development such as that on the south side of Burway Road between High Street and Church Street could give rise to plans for redevelopment. There is considerable scope for this to be enhancing of the Conservation Area. Narrowing the street to provide an urban frontage without frontage parking could give sufficient added value to improve the street layout in the area and enhance the potential for public use.
- The A49 is a major problem for the Conservation Area and the town as a whole. It is an enormous intrusion into the visual and social character of the town which would have been bypassed long ago were there to have been any practical method of doing this. The impact of the junction with Sandford Avenue is particularly intrusive⁶⁷, but, given the nature and extent of conflicting traffic movements, it is difficult to see how improvements could be achieved.

5. Community involvement

The Church Stretton Conservation Area was originally designated in 1986. In 2007 the Parish decided to prepare a Town Design Statement⁶⁸. This statement was a useful background document in the preparation of this Appraisal.

The appraisal was carried out in consultation with representatives of Church Stretton Parish Council, the Strettondale Area Partnership, the Strettons Civic Society, the Church Stretton Town Design Statement Committee, the Church Stretton Chamber of Trade and the National Trust.

6. Suggested boundary changes

English Heritage guidance⁶⁹ suggests that, in the past, conservation area boundaries have tended to be drawn too tightly. This may have been borne of a desire to ensure uniformity of architectural quality and character. But this approach has meant less emphasis on aspects of more general historic interest. Sometimes this had led to less coherent conservation areas than would otherwise be the case.

In the case of Church Stretton the picture is mixed. The boundary of the Conservation Area set in 1986 was drawn tightly around the historic core of the town. Later consideration of boundary extensions did not provide a consistent approach as so many of the areas for possible inclusion contained significant amounts of modern development.

There seems little point in including aspects of the town's setting in the Conservation Area. This is for 3 reasons:

- The setting is protected against new development by planning policy.
- The whole area lies within the Shropshire Hills AONB. This status requires sensitivity to be adopted in the design of any development that does take place.
- The burden on landowners of having to notify the LPA of all works to trees would be disproportionately onerous.

⁶⁷ Photo CS126

⁶⁸ *Church Stretton Town Design Statement, 2007*

⁶⁹ English Heritage, *Guidance on Conservation Areas Appraisals*



English Heritage guidance also suggests that the values ascribed to an area by the local community should be recognised⁷⁰.

Taking these aspects together, there is a strong case for 5 extensions to the Conservation Area:

- The Edwardian suburbs to the east of the A49. This has a similar character to that of the Madiera Walk and Trevor Hill area which is already included.
- The area around Crossways and the station. This has little architectural merit but is historically interesting because of its development by the Stretton Land and Development Companies.
- An area at the south-west end of Cunners Road. This includes the grounds of the Long Mynd Hotel and surrounding land.
- Carding Mill Valley. This has played a significant part in the history of the town. In view of the protection given to the landscape by AONB designation and ownership by the National Trust, it is proposed to draw the boundary fairly tightly around the C19 mill development and associated engineering remains.
- Minor amendments to the boundaries in several places.

This appraisal has been carried out on the basis that the Conservation Area will be extended as suggested. Detailed reasoning is apparent from the appraisal.

7. Information

Further information about the village and its history may be obtained from:

- Church Stretton Library, Local Studies Section
- Shropshire Local Studies Library, *Documents concerning the Parish of Church Stretton*
- Bilbey, D, *Church Stretton*, Phillimore, 1985
- Bilbey, D, *Church Stretton Walkabout*, Stretton Society, 1987
- Newman, J, and Pevsner N, *Shropshire*, YUP 2006, *The Buildings of England* series
- Pevsner N, *Shropshire*, Penguin, 1958, *The Buildings of England* series.

Further information on planning and conservation policy, practice and guidance is available from sources contained in footnotes. All development should make full reference to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework), Shropshire Council Local Development Framework and The Church Stretton Town Design Statement.

8. Management Proposals

The public realm in the Conservation Area is generally good. However if a Management Plan was completed it may address the following issues:

- A rolling programme of streetscape renewal including surfaces and street furniture.
- A review of highway and other signage with a view to rationalisation to lessen adverse visual impact.
- An audit of boundary treatments (walls, fences and hedges) with advice to owners on ways of achieving high quality renewals.
- The removal of overhead power lines and telecommunications cables.

⁷⁰

Ibid, para. 4.3



- A full tree survey within the Conservation Area with specific proposals for the long-term management and review of Tree Preservation Orders.
- Town centre management in general including traffic management and on- and off-street car parking.

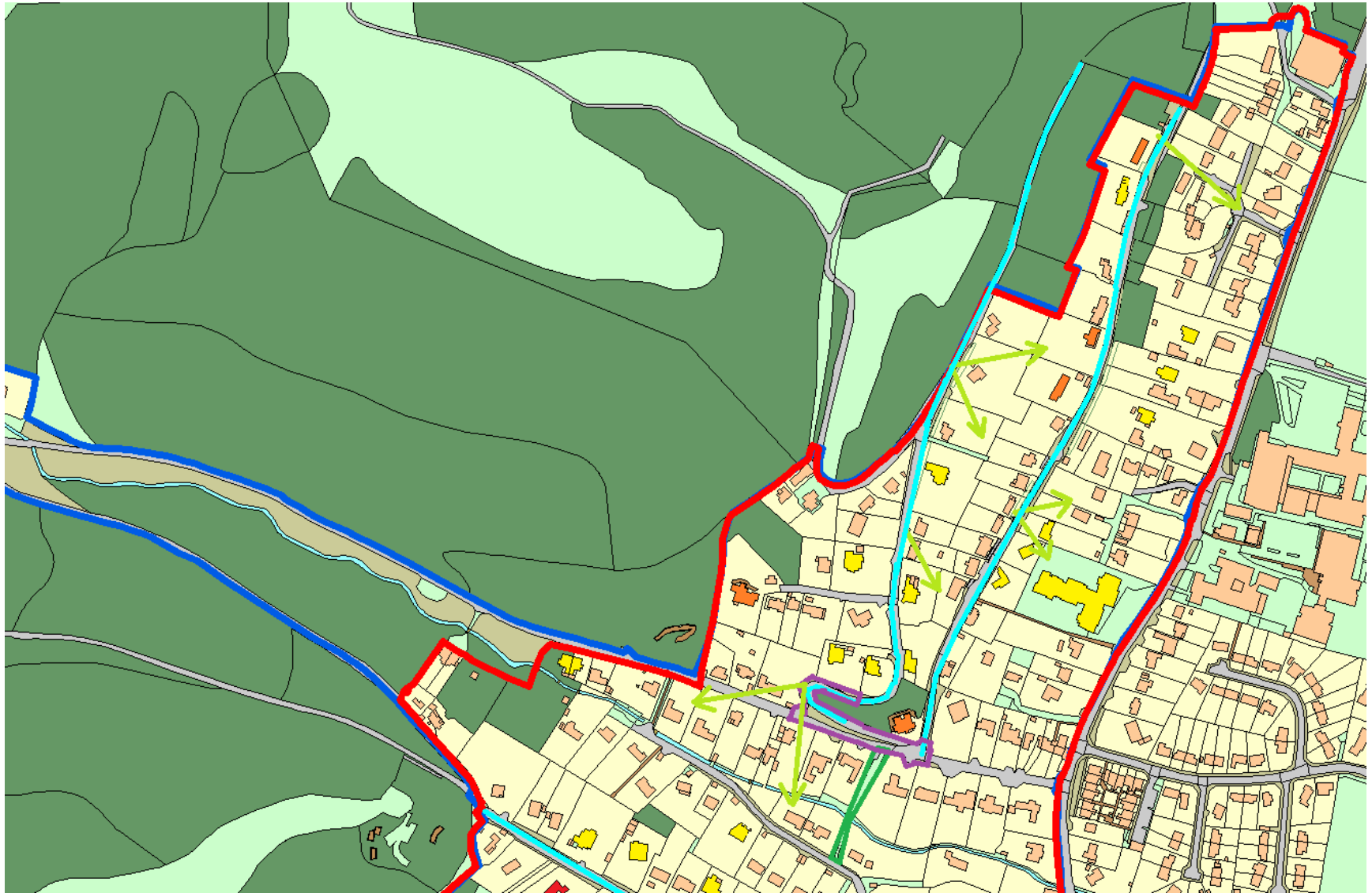


Plans

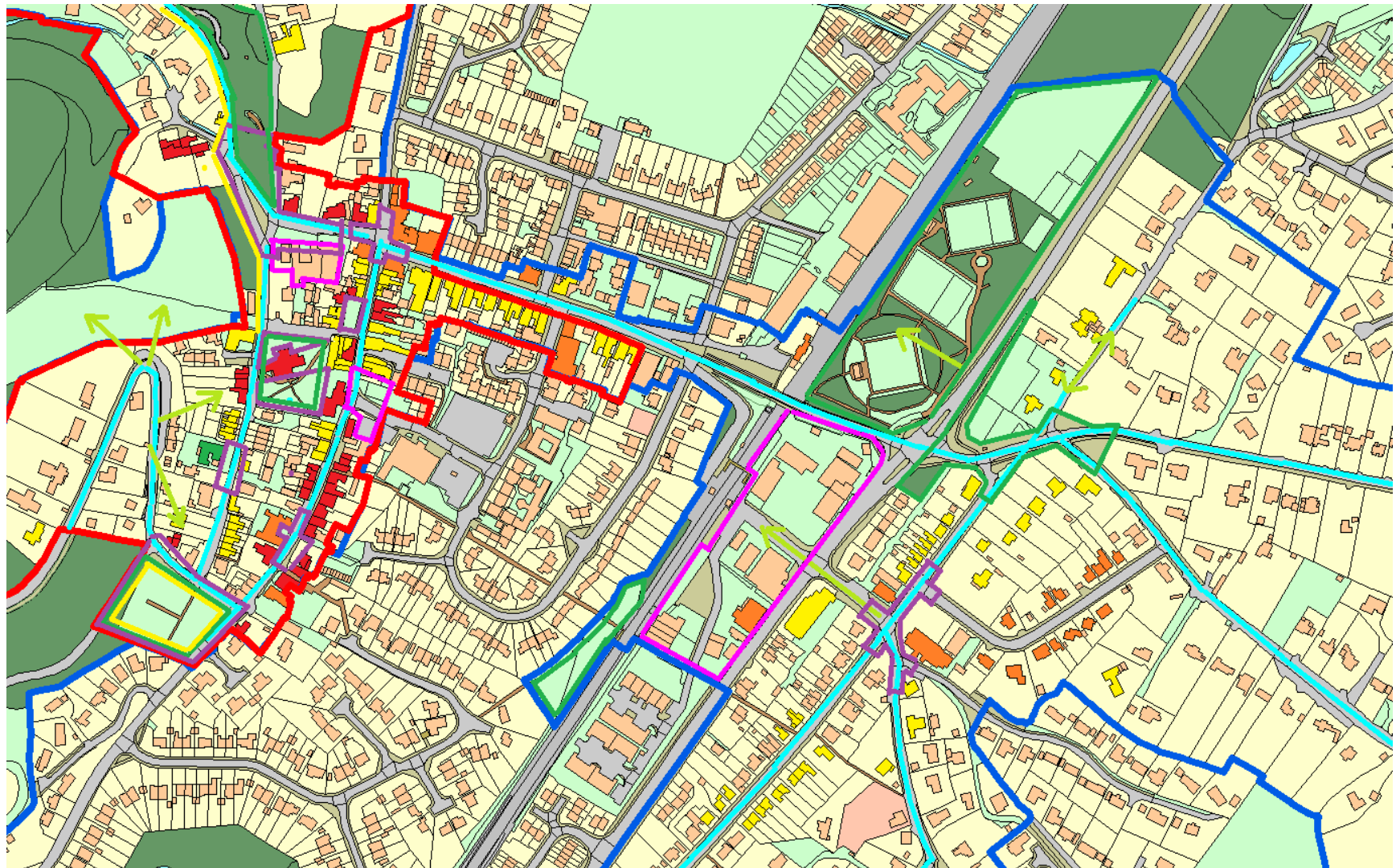
Key

Conservation Area Boundary	
Proposed Extension	
Listed Buildings	
Buildings with Listing Potential	
Buildings of townscape significance	
Mentioned in text	
Others	
Significant Spaces	
Green Spaces	
Townscape Sequences	
Significant Views	
Significant Walls	
Areas of Intrusion and Damage	

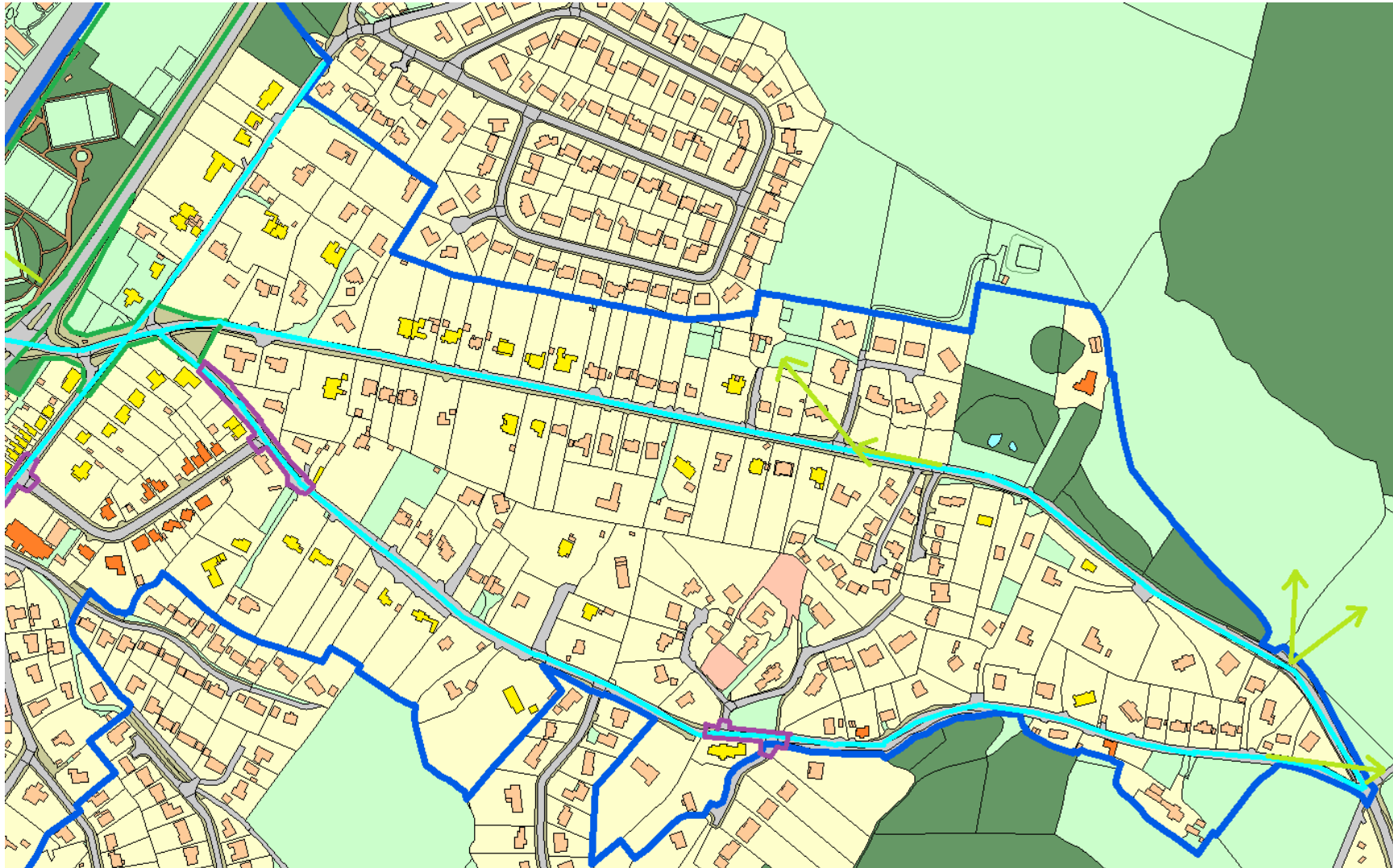
Plan 1 - North



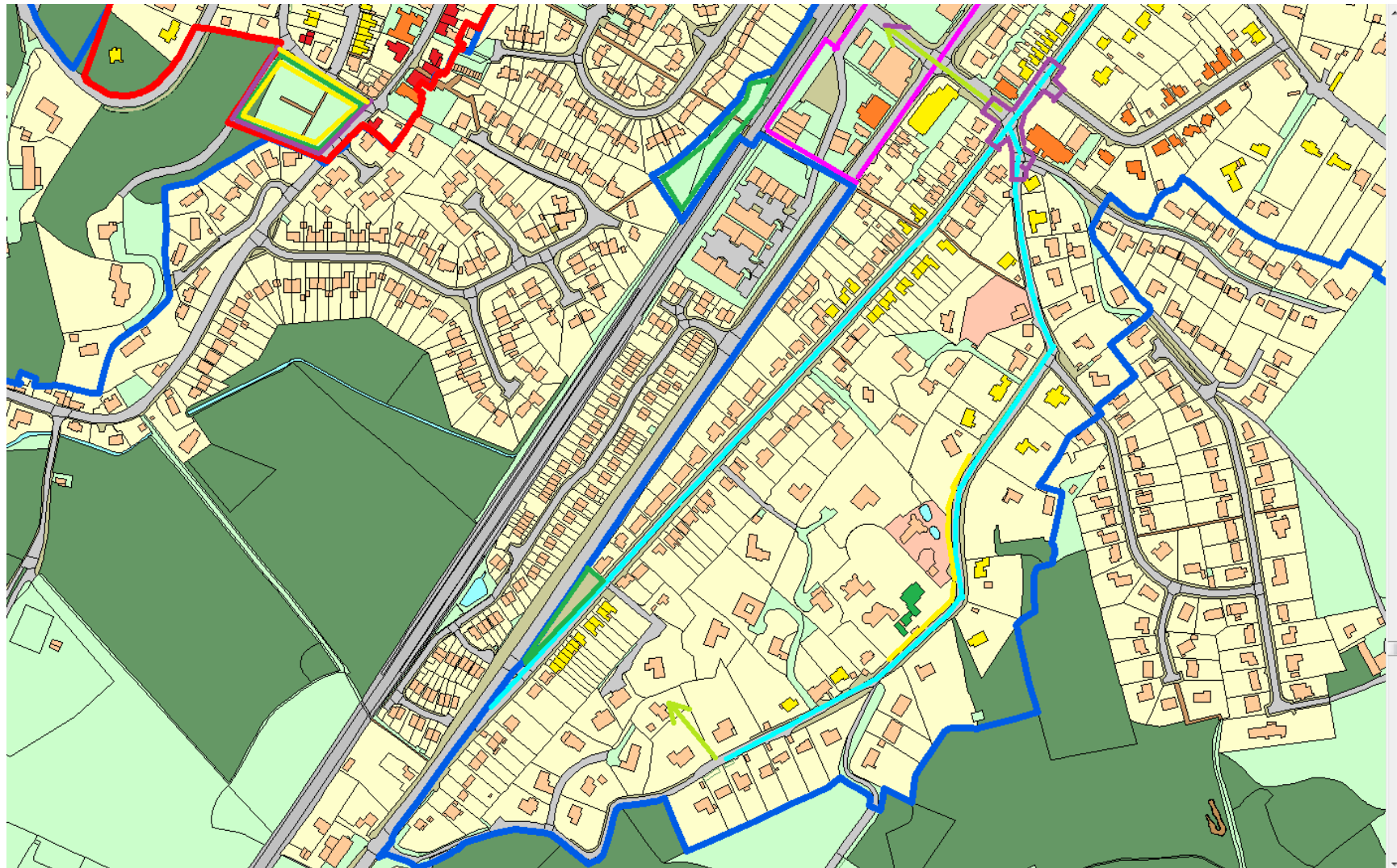
Plan 2 - Central



Plan 3 - East



Plan 4 - South



Plan 6 – Carding Mill Valley

