

Cannock Town Centre

Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document



April 2014

Conservation Area Management Plan: **Cannock Town Centre**

Introduction

This area-specific Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) follows from the Council's Conservation Areas Management Plan which sets out the package of measures available to the Council to apply to all of its Conservation Areas. The area-specific plans relate to each of the individual Conservation Areas based on the recommendations in the individual Conservation Area Appraisals and should be read in conjunction with the generic Management Plan.

Cannock Town Centre Conservation Area

Cannock Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in November 1991 and covers the historic core of the town. Its boundary is shown on Plan 1. Cannock is situated to the south and south-west of the forest, heathland and high ground of Cannock Chase, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty since 1958. The town dates back to the medieval period with a historic medieval street layout based upon a broad market place.

The Conservation Area comprises Market Place and High Green, extending north into Stafford Road and south and east into Wolverhampton Road and around the churchyard. St Luke's churchyard and the 18th Century bowling green with their mature tree planting create two key green spaces within the Conservation Area. A diversity of building types and heights, though mainly 2 and 3 storey, enclose the street frontages. Some significant 18th Century buildings create distinctive features of the town centre, though much of it appears to date from the 19th and 20th Century during the period of Cannock's main expansion as coal mining developed. Traffic was removed from the town centre in the 1990's. Shops form the predominant use at ground floor level, together with banks, estate agents and pubs, cafes and shops. Upper floor uses include retail storage, offices, dental surgeries and flats.

Issues identified in the Cannock Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

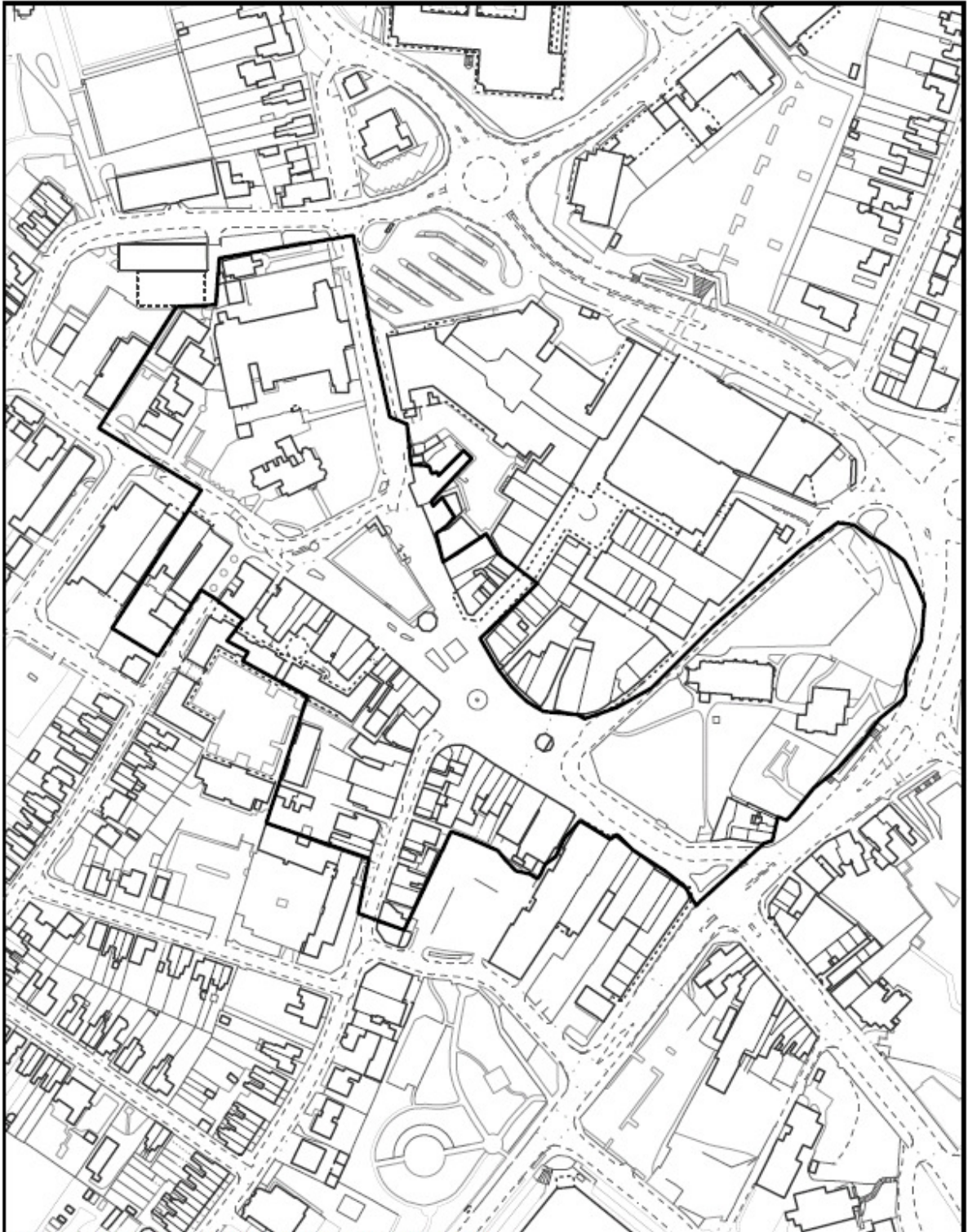
The Conservation Area Appraisal for Cannock Town Centre has been adopted in April 2014. It defines the special architectural character and historic interest of the Conservation Area and identifies its negative features, illustrated in the Townscape Plan 4. It makes recommendations for future management and enhancement opportunities arising from this assessment, aiming to reinforce the positive features and eliminate the negative to ensure the continued quality of its special interest over time.

Summary of its Special Interest:

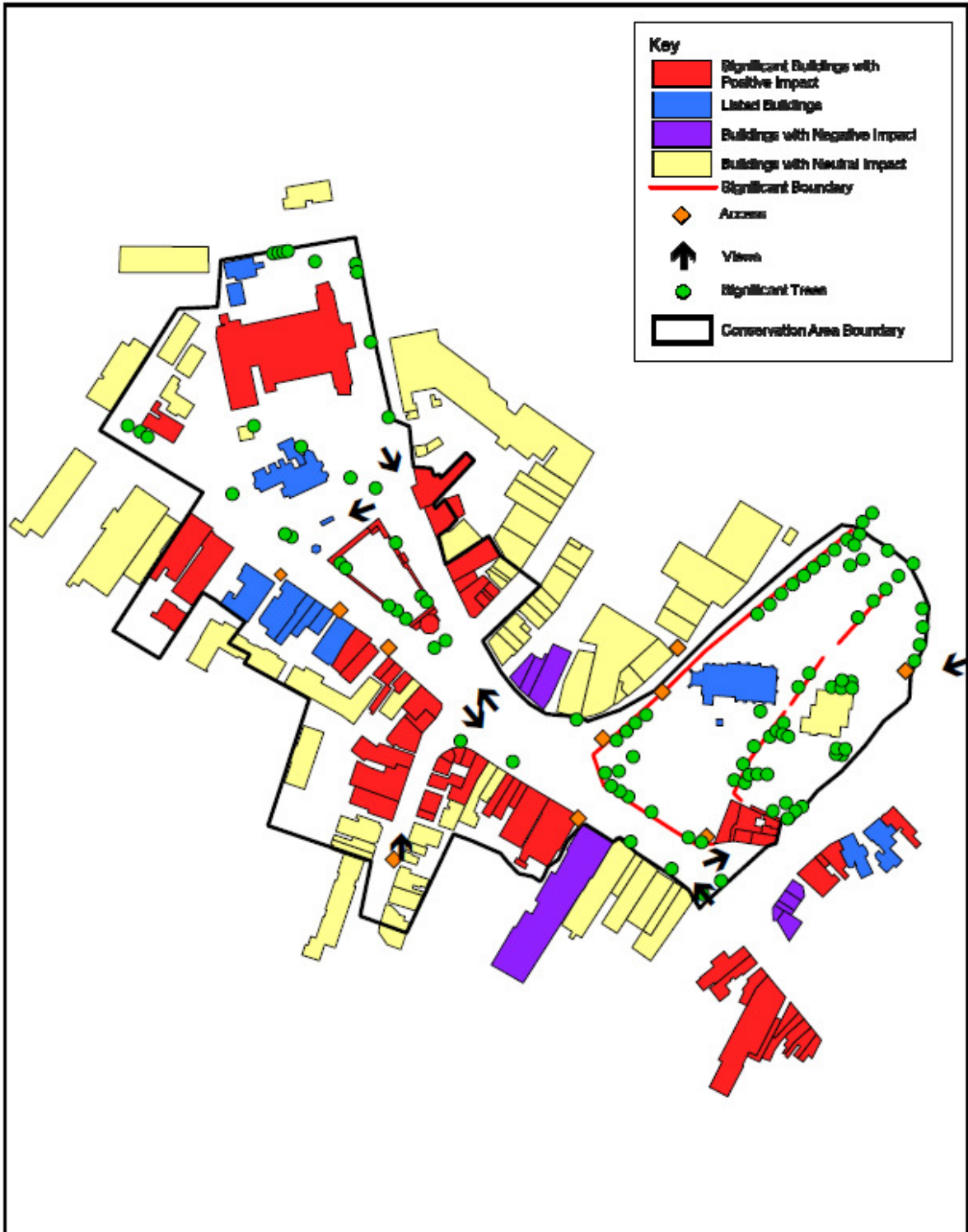
- Its long history still evident in its spacious layout and distinctive buildings
- Its mixed, generally small scale, retail/commercial uses and markets
- Its townscape of diverse building types and buildings/groups of individual interest, harmonised by continuity, mass, scale and materials around an open market place
- Its prominent green focal points of bowling green and churchyard enhanced by mature tree planting



PLAN 1: CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY



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Main Issues:

1. The retention and enhancement of buildings and characteristic features making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, including architectural detailing and mature tree planting, and support for the role of historic buildings in accommodating diverse town centre uses on multiple floors.
2. The treatment of new development and new additions to existing buildings within and affecting the setting of the Conservation Area, including building lines and siting, height and mass, design, materials, views of landmarks, shopfronts and signage.
3. The potential for enhancement of the Conservation Area through the reduction of 'clutter' and refurbishment of the public realm, with a focus on the central open area around the Market Place and opportunities for enhancement with new tree planting and increased vitality with open markets.

Delivery Plan/Targets/Resources

A package of measures as set out in the Council's generic Conservation Areas Management Plan is available to deal with the above issues in a way beneficial to the Conservation Area. Their effective use is dependant not only on the Council but on a partnership approach involving the commitment of developers, development professionals and the local community. This area-specific Management Plan seeks to stimulate debate on how the issues might be addressed.

1. The retention and enhancement of buildings and characteristic features

- The Council will encourage the retention, repair and maintenance of the following characteristic features on all buildings making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, including the unlisted buildings of particular interest (see Fig. 1):
 - timber windows, particularly sash windows, and doors to traditional designs and details
 - predominance of red brick buildings with some light coloured stucco/painted render
 - blue slate and small red and blue clay roof tiles
 - predominance of pitched roofs with roof slopes facing the street
 - chimney stacks, some with clay pots
 - decorative eaves, window surrounds and doorcases
 - cast iron or cast metal rainwater pipes and gutters
 - spacious street layout with building frontages abutting streets
 - timber shopfronts to a traditional design
- The Council will discourage use of artificial materials and non-traditional designs, which are bland and lacking in the rich textures and colours of natural materials, and the painting and rendering of brick buildings
- Safeguarding characteristic features will require an acceptance by property owners of their intrinsic value and a commitment to invest in their property to maintain its historic value. Historic features can be slowly lost through decay and under-investment as well as more rapidly through modernisation and unsympathetic over-investment. The Council will undertake to work with property owners to encourage appropriate maintenance.
- The Council will consider the preparation of design guidance on specific issues and offer other advice on request or via its website which can be sought prior to carrying out work.
- The Council will review the Conservation Area boundary from time to time to ensure it is still workable and that it encompasses a definable cohesive area with a particular character. Often a conservation area will include both road frontages however in Cannock some sections of both

Fig. 1: Features typical of the Conservation Area vulnerable to removal and decay: timber windows, architectural details, historic shopfronts



- frontages have been excluded at this stage due to the extent of modern infill development not characteristic of the older parts of the area.
- The Council will pursue enforcement action where unsympathetic alterations which threaten the character or appearance of the Conservation Area are carried out without the necessary planning permission to achieve a more sympathetic result.
- The Council will encourage maximum occupancy of properties, including flats and other appropriate uses above shops, to enhance the viability and vitality of the town centre.
- The Council will promote street markets and other events which bring life into the town centre.

2. The treatment of new development

- The Council will require proposals for new infill development and redevelopment to adhere to well-established good urban design principles for scale, mass, form, materials, layout, density, landscaping and boundary treatment, with the use of good contemporary design and materials or more traditional options as appropriate, and reflecting existing variety of building types harmonised by continuity, mass, scale and materials maintaining or enhancing views through the Conservation Area.
- The Council will require new development to reinforce existing strong frontages with buildings abutting streets and maintaining the spacious town centre core with its prominent green focal points and views through it.
- The Council will consider the preparation of design guidance on specific issues such as design of shopfronts and signage and identify areas where further guidance would be beneficial.
- The existing mix of uses, predominantly retail, will be maintained with any compatible additional uses considered which would enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- The Council will apply the same principles to any opportunity sites occupied by buildings of neutral or negative impact within or sites affecting the setting of the Conservation Area which come forward for redevelopment.
- The Council will seek developer contributions in conjunction with planning permissions in accordance with the Council's current policy on developer contributions, and will consider using a proportion of them for enhancement of the public realm.

3. Enhancement of the public realm

- The Council will work towards a co-ordinated approach to enhancement of the public realm in the Conservation Area including replacement or refurbishment of street furniture consistent with the existing predominant style, repair and relaying of areas of paving and traditional granite kerbs where damaged. Opportunities to visually enhance the multi-storey car park will be welcomed.
- Also the removal/discouragement of modern 'clutter' from pedestrian areas, particularly at focal points, which is poor visually and an impediment to the sight impaired in particular, in accordance with Historic England guidance 'Streets for All' (see Fig 2) and encouraging careful design and avoidance of random signage and equipment.
- The Council will consider the potential for enhancement of the town centre through new and replacement tree planting for the longer term in appropriate locations, particularly in maintaining the key green focal points around the central zone of the Bowling Green and Churchyard.
- The Council will encourage the operation of open markets in Market Place to enhance the vitality of the town centre and explore opportunities for appointment of a Town Centre Manager to provide a co-ordinating role.

Fig.2 : The public realm - well designed signage and paving, well located street furniture sited close to existing structures and poorly located utility cabinet 'clutter' standing alone



Monitoring

The Council will monitor progress towards the delivery of the above actions and the resultant impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area on a five-year cycle. Some of the actions will be on-going, some will relate to specific actions which can be completed. The monitoring process together with developing planning policy will inform updating of the Appraisal and Management Plan over time.

Monitoring will involve further consultation with the local community and may identify new issues and ideas for raising standards. Monitoring could also be carried out within the community under the guidance of the Council.