



Holmes Chapel
Conservation Area
Appraisal

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Executive Summary

This report is a Conservation Area Appraisal, commissioned by Holmes Chapel Parish Council for Holmes Chapel Conservation Area. The area is small and compact, centred around The Church of St. Luke, a Grade I listed building, and The Square. It also includes Church View, which has a number of listed buildings around the Church, and Church Walk, a narrow 19th century alleyway.

This appraisal has assessed the significance of the conservation area, and those features that contribute to its special architectural or historic interest. It also identifies what features are important to preserve or enhance, and what features would benefit with improvement. This is in accordance with national and local planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework on the historic environment and the local plan.

The report makes further recommendations to support the area's special architectural or historic interest. These are contained within the Holmes Chapel Conservation Area Management Plan.

Holmes Chapel Conservation Area was designated in 1974. Its boundaries have not changed since that date. The area has been subject to a number of changes since that date. Some have taken the form of new development, while other changes are more incremental in nature. It is considered that the conservation area remains an area of special architectural and historic interest. Of particular note is its street hierarchy, the impressive Church of St. Luke, the collection of historic buildings and their simple aesthetic qualities in The Square and Church View, and views in the conservation area, which are principally focused on key listed buildings.

Paragraph 200 of the NPPF states that “Local Planning Authorities should look for **opportunities for new development** 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 the asset should be treated favourably”.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This conservation area appraisal has been commissioned by Holmes Chapel Parish Council and undertaken by Henderson Heritage. It follows guidance produced by Historic England on conservation area appraisal. The intention is to objectively record the existing character of the conservation area which is based on the area's special architectural and historic characteristics.

The area of study centres on the church and its immediate environs. This includes The Square and buildings around the Church of St Luke. It also includes areas recommended for inclusion. This will be subject to public consultation.

1.2 Definition of a Conservation Area

A conservation area is defined under S 69 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area ***'of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'***

The local planning authority has the responsibility for designating and reviewing the extent of designation and to designate further areas if appropriate. Section 71 of the Act imposes a duty on the local planning authority to formulate, communicate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas.

Designation recognises the unique features that contributes to the distinctiveness of an area as a whole. This may also include its setting.

1.3 The Value of Conservation Area Appraisals

The special interest and character of Conservation areas may be affected, both positively and negatively, by direct physical change or by changes in their setting.

Identifying the conservation area's special architectural and historic interest is fundamental to understanding its locally distinctive character. Recording these features in an appraisal ensures that a common ground is established, and it is easily understood. It also identifies the capacity for future changes.

An appraisal will lead to a better understanding of the conservation area's history, local distinctiveness, character, setting and condition, which together contribute to the place it is today. This will form part of the evidence base for positive management of the conservation area in which changes can be considered within a robust policy framework, including Neighbourhood Plan policies and other supplementary planning guidance.

Once the appraisal is adopted by the local planning authority, it becomes a material consideration to use when making development and appeal decisions. It is also relevant to decisions made by the Secretary of State when considering urgent works to preserve an unlisted building in a conservation area.

The characteristics of the conservation area defined by this document should be the starting point for further discussion with the local planning authority where alterations are being considered to or will affect a heritage asset(s).

Each site will be judged on its own merits and on those positive elements which make the Holmes Chapel Conservation Area significant.

1.4 Methodology

The content of this report has been based on fieldwork analysis, which has been summarised in this document.

A key aspect of the survey work was to record buildings of local interest and townscape merit. These are buildings that are not listed, nor are they likely to be, but are sufficiently important to reflect the distinct character of the area.

The appraisal summarises the area and has sub categorised it according to the contribution that the characteristics make to the overall townscape value and character of the conservation area. These areas have been defined as: -

- Critical** – of key importance, defining the distinct character of the conservation area
- Positive** – contributes strongly and positively to the character of the conservation area
- Neutral** – neither positive nor negative features that contribute to the conservation area
- Negative** – detracting from the character of the conservation area

1.5 Scope of the appraisal

This document is not intended to be comprehensive in its scope and content. It may not include every feature or aspect located in or adjoining to the Conservation Area, but it may well be of significance as evidence emerges.

Such information will be considered in conjunction with the appraisal during the course of decision making by the local planning authority.

The appraisal recommends actions that will be supported in the Conservation Area Management Plan. Some of this will be through the Development Management process. A review of existing boundaries has also been undertaken to determine if areas should be included or removed from the designation.

2.0 Legislative and Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the legislative and national policy framework for Conservation Area appraisals and management plans.

Under Section 66 of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, when assessing planning applications, there is a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed buildings or their settings. Section 72(1) of the same Act, states that the local planning authority must pay special attention ‘to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.’

Policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local development plans, including neighbourhood plans, set out national and local planning policy in respect to the conservation of the historic environment.

The NPPF (paragraph 185) states:

‘Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

- the desirability of **sustaining and enhancing** the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.
- the **wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits** that conservation of the historic environment can bring.
- the desirability of **new development making a positive contribution to local character** and distinctiveness.
- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the **character of a place**’.

A **heritage asset** is described in the glossary of the NPPF (Annex 2) as a “building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).” (*Annex 2: Glossary, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, June 2019*).

Designated heritage assets as those designated under legislation. These are a “World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area”

Non-Designated Heritage Assets are described in the NPPF as heritage assets. They are defined on the Government’s website as “buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.” (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>).

The definition of **significance** in relation to heritage policy is defined in the glossary of the NPPF as “The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. “

The **setting** of a heritage asset is defined as “The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.” Setting is not a heritage designation.

Holmes Chapel has Civil Parish status. It was previously part of the Borough of Congleton. It is now within the Cheshire East borough unitary authority area.

The new **Cheshire East Local Plan** is currently under preparation and will be in two parts. Part 1 is the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS), adopted in July 2017.

The policies within the CELPS that are relevant to the historic built environment are

Local Plan Policy SE1 seeks to achieve a sense of place by protecting or enhancing quality and character of settlements and ensuring high quality and sensitive design in proximity to heritage assets including high quality public realm.

Local Plan Policy SE7 states that the character, quality and diversity of Cheshire East's historic environment will be conserved and enhanced. In all heritage contexts, high quality design should be achieved.

Part 2, the Site Allocations Development Planning Document (SADPD) policies HER1-HER9 are relevant considerations where applicable

Policy HER 3 relates to Conservation areas and states that proposals should take account of the established townscape and landscape character of the area and its wider setting

Policy HER 4 relates to Listed buildings and states development proposals affecting a listed building or its setting will be expected to preserve and enhance the asset and its setting wherever possible. This includes ensuring that new development affecting the setting of listed buildings takes account of existing townscapes, local landmarks, views and skylines.

Policy HER 7 relates Non-designated heritage assets and is in line with CELPS Policy SE7 stating development proposals will be encouraged and supported where they are designed to preserve or enhance the significance of non-designated heritage assets.

Particularly relevant is **Policy S15: Advertisements in Conservation Areas** which clearly states that advertisements in conservation areas should satisfy all of the following criteria: -

- Signs shall be either painted or individually lettered in a suitable material and shall be of an appropriate size and design in relation to the building upon which they are to be displayed and the character of the area in which the building is situated
- Signs shall preferably be non-illuminated. Where illumination is justified, it should be discreet and uncoloured illumination integrated into the design of the shopfront
- The form of signs shall be of a traditional fascia or hanging type depicting, by means of painting or three-dimensional techniques, the trade or service offered.
- Signs shall, other in the most exceptional circumstances, be of a minimum size necessary to convey their message.

The Holmes Chapel Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2030 forms part of the current Local Development Plan has relevant policies on Character and Design (Policy CE5) stating that new buildings should blend with the landscape and the village environment, and Heritage (Policy CE6) with the objective of protecting the heritage and historical assets of the area.

2.2 Conservation Area Policy Guidance

The following **Historic England documents** were consulted as part of this appraisal:-

- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)
- Historic England *2019 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Second edition, Historic England Advice Note 1*
- Historic England *2017 The Setting of Heritage Assets, Second Edition, Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3*

Historic England's Streets for All (2018) provides advice for Highway and Public Realm works in Historic Places. This document sets out five goals for public realm enhancement as

- An inclusive environment
- Public safety and ease of movement
- A healthy environment that supports our wellbeing and cohesion
- A high-quality environment, and
- Economic benefit.

Identifying significance is contained in the Historic England document Conservation Principles, (2008). Four heritage values are assigned through which a site or place can be interpreted: evidential, historical, communal and aesthetic.

Ways to write the assessment is contained in the Historic England suite of documents Understanding Place, as well as Heritage Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management 2019

Public consultation will be undertaken on the appraisal and its contents.

2.3 What Does Designation Mean?

This requirement, as set out in legislation, is also reflected in national and local policy. This is particularly relevant in determining applications for development.

The legislative requirements are to encourage positive conservation and management. These include statutory permissions for: -

- **Demolition** - Planning permission is usually required to totally or substantially demolish buildings or structures within a conservation area.
- **Permitted development** - The extent of 'permitted' development is reduced, such as cladding, extensions to the side of the original dwelling or the installation of satellite dishes.
- **Pruning or felling trees** – A Section 211 Notice is required to the local planning authority for such works to trees in the conservation area, which are over 75mm in trunk diameter, and higher than 1.5 meters above ground level. This is different to works to trees protected separately under a **Tree Preservation Order (TPO)** where the written consent of the Local Planning Authority is required. Should a tree be felled, a replacement is usually required.
- **Advertisements** - Restrictions apply regarding the type and size of advertisements that can be erected without advertisement consent.

Other permissions

The Town and Country Planning Act (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GPDO) sets out **permitted development rights** for certain minor forms of development - i.e., development that may be legitimately undertaken without the need for planning permission.

A local planning authority can remove permitted development rights in order to positively enhance the special interest of a conservation area, under an Article 4 direction. **This allows certain types of small-scale development to take place with the benefit of further discussion and if required, with planning permission.**

It is designed to further consider the impact of incremental changes to features such as windows, doors, chimneys boundary walls and gate posts and certain types of extensions, before they are undertaken. It also allows for time to provide an agreed design solution that suits both the applicant and the special character of the conservation area.

3.0 Assessment of Special Interest

3.1 Designation of Holmes Chapel Conservation Area

Holmes Chapel Conservation Area was designated a Conservation Area by Congleton Borough Council in 1974. The boundary has not been assessed or amended.

3.2 Location and Setting

Holmes Chapel is located on the River Dane, 4 miles east of Middlewich, 5 miles north of Sandbach, 8 miles north of Crewe, 20 miles north of Stoke on Trent, and 24 miles south of Manchester. The centre of the village is approximately 1 mile east of Junction 18 of the M6. The M6 forms the administrative boundary between Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East borough councils.

Holmes Chapel is 5 miles south west of Jodrell Bank and its world-famous telescopes. It is located within **the buffer zone of the Jodrell Bank Observatory World Heritage Site**, which was designated in 2019. The World Heritage Site boundary includes the iconic Lovell Telescope, and a number of other radio telescopes, including Mark II. It also includes functional buildings and archaeology associated with the development of the site. The Jodrell Bank Observatory World Heritage Site Nomination Text provides the criteria and justification for designation.

The village centre includes a collection of buildings around The Square and the Church of St Luke. This area comprises the historic core of the village and is designated as a conservation area. It is a small and compact conservation area located along the south side of the west – east A 535 Middlewich Road on the junction and the north – south A 50 from Middlewich Road, The Square. It also includes Church View and Church Walk. The topography is flat and there is a solid and consistent building and street line. It is a busy urban village, with mostly commercial properties, but some are residential to the west and east of the village centre.

The special interest of the Holmes Chapel Conservation Area derives from the following elements:

- Urban village centre around key historic roads
- Historic core of the village focused on the Church of St Luke and The Square
- The high-quality townscape and domestic village character of Church View
- The historic and hierarchical street layout that includes The Square, Church View, and Church Walk
- Stop views of key historic buildings
- The leafy approach roads to the village centre

The form of the historic village is recognisable today from the nucleated settlement pattern of the 19th century. There have been some changes, such as the demolition of The Bulls head in 1948 as a consequence of road improvements, and the George and Dragon in 1970. However, the architecture is recognisable and distinct and the character compact.

The village has expanded in the 19th and 20th century and the development pattern and architectural style of the periods are clearly recognisable.

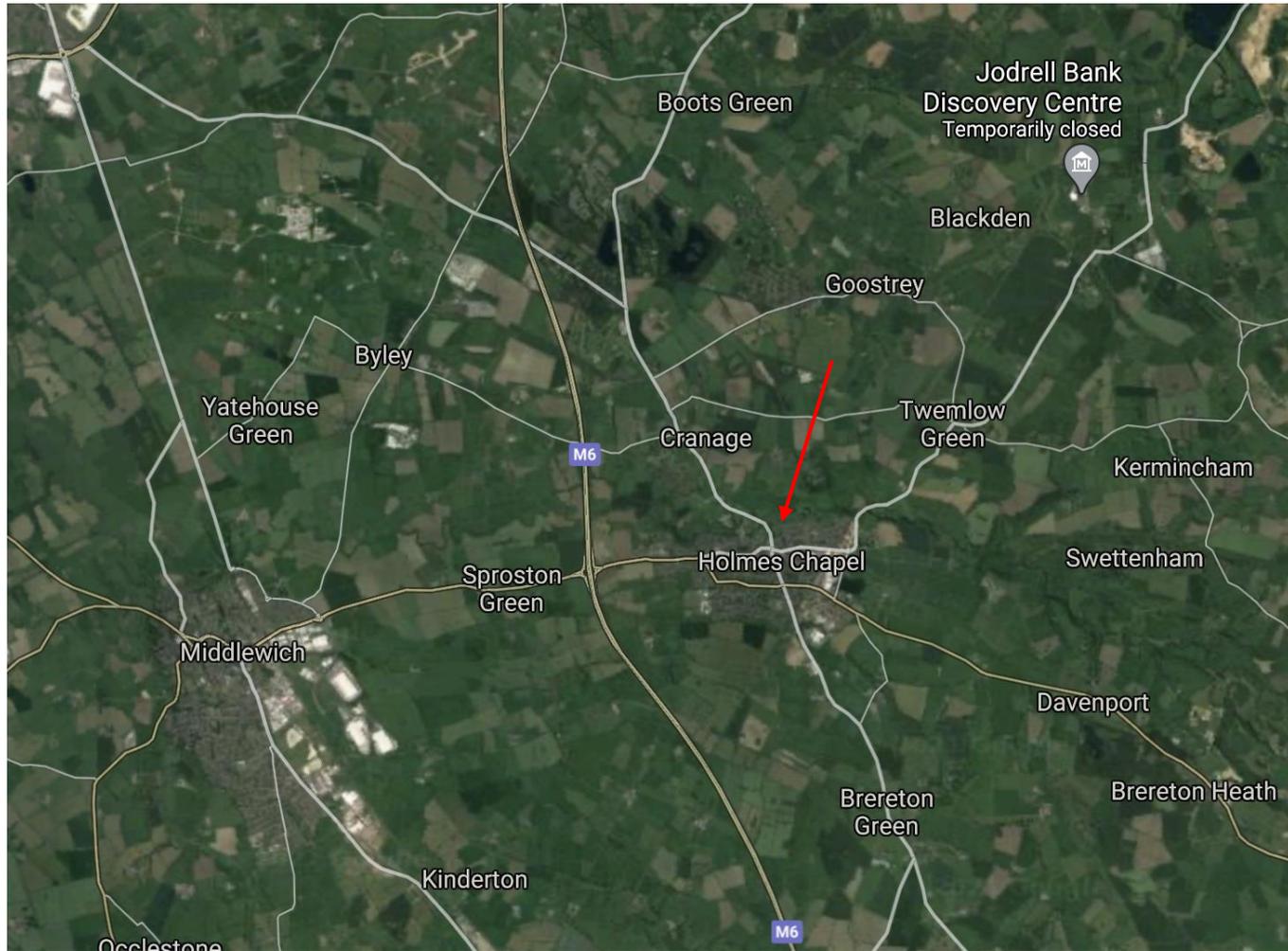


Fig 1. Location plan of Holmes Chapel (Source: Google Maps)

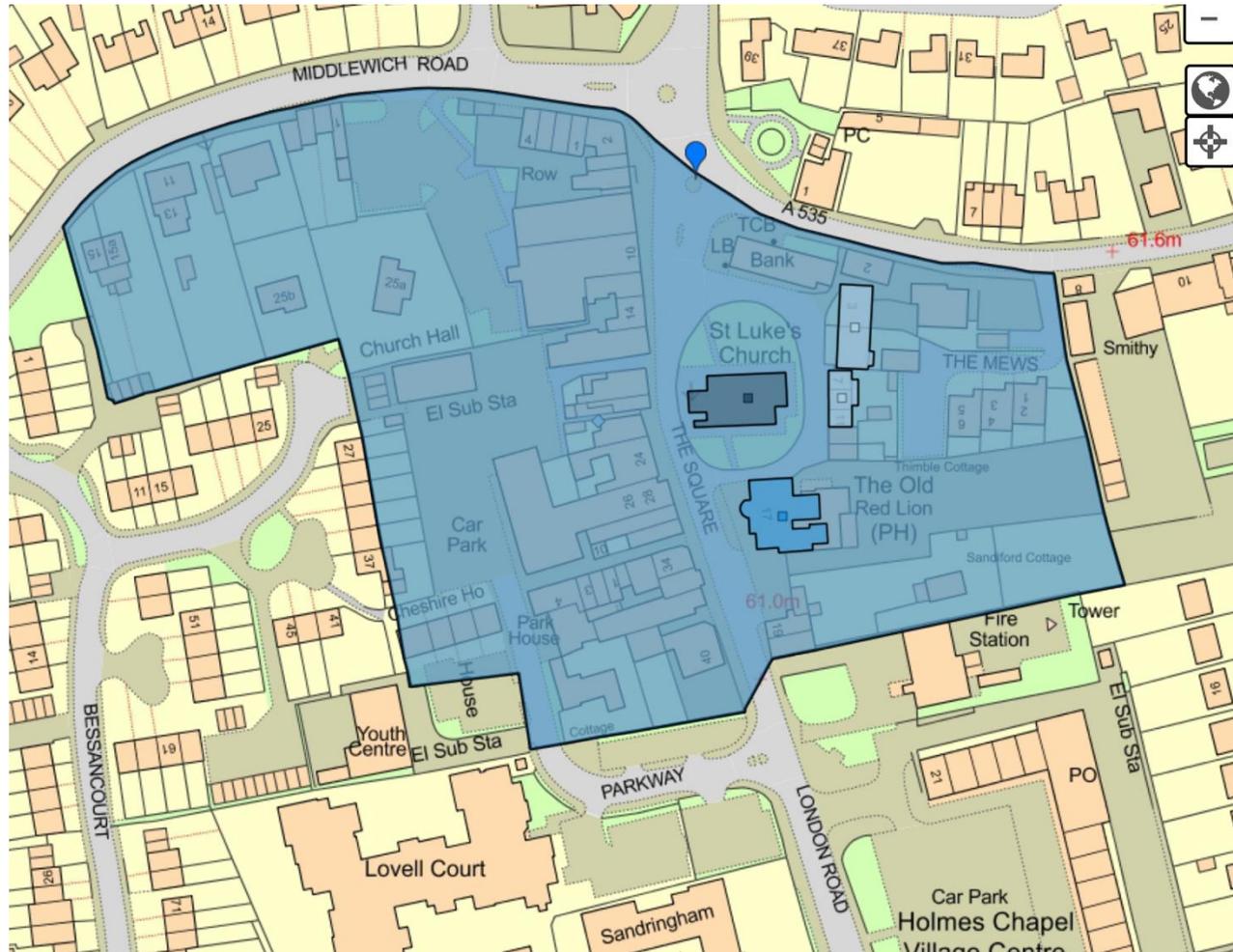


Fig 2. Holmes Chapel Conservation Area. Listed buildings are denoted in grey (Grade I), dark blue (Grade II*), light blue (Grade II) (Copyright: Cheshire East)



The Church of St. Luke, The Red Lion and No. 5 Church View

3.3 Sub areas

Holmes Chapel is a small conservation area. Within it, there are five distinct character areas: -

- 1. The Square** - the historic core of the village. This incorporates the buildings facing The Square
- 2. Church View** - a narrow lane behind and including the Church of St Luke
- 3. Church Walk** - a narrow alleyway or ginnel
- 4. Middlewich Road** - traditional housing along Middlewich Road
- 5. Modern development** - this includes The Mews, Parkway, and the car park behind The Square off Middlewich Road.

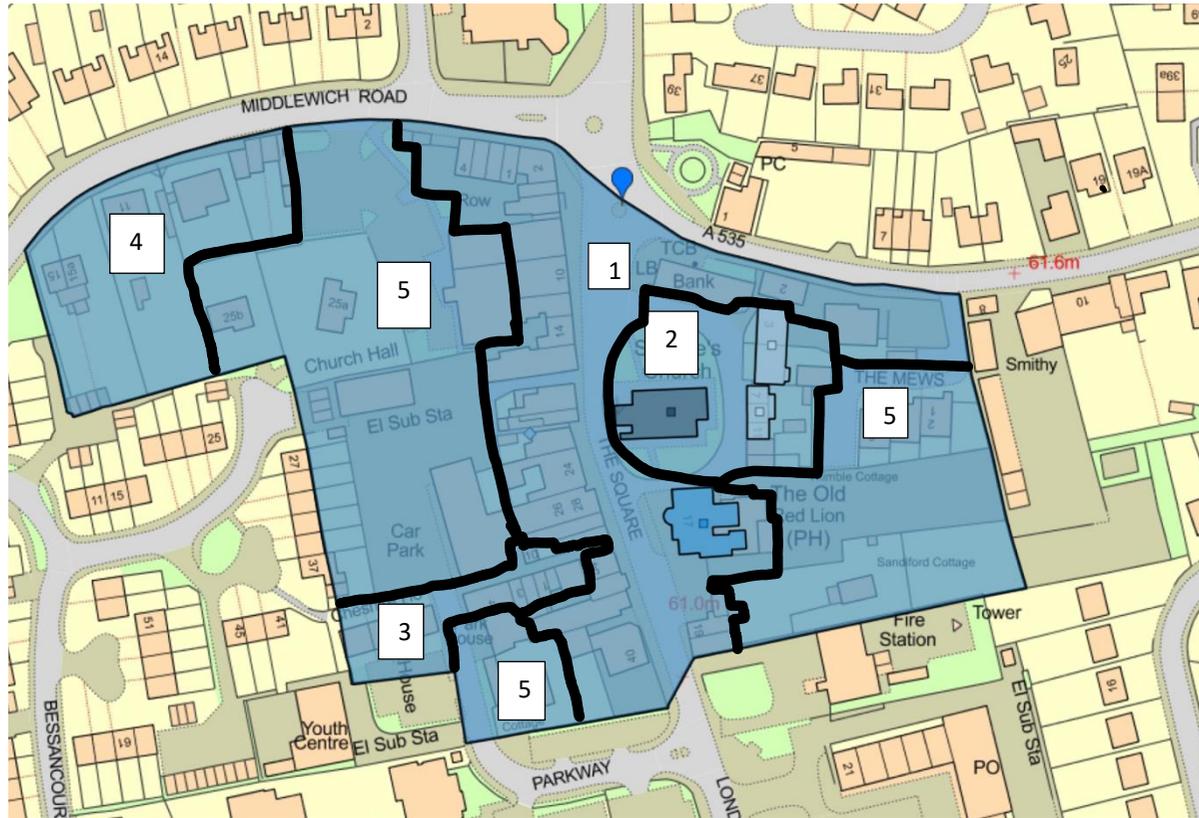


Fig 3. Map of sub-areas

3.4 Historical Development

An extremely comprehensive history of Holmes Chapel has been undertaken by the Holmes Chapel local history group (www.holmeschapelhistory.co.uk). Key historical facts relevant to the conservation area have been reproduced here.

Holmes Chapel, known also previously as Church Hulme and Hulmes Chapel, is a village, township and chapelry in the Ecclesiastical Parish of Sandbach. It was located in the Northwich Hundred. It was a village of agricultural origins, that has expanded from its nucleated settlement pattern somewhat in the 19th and 20th century. The core of the village is located around an historic crossroads, situated between the River Dane to the north and the River Croco to the south.

The village centre is historic and compact. Many of the buildings on The Square are on **the tithe map**. This shows a linear row of shops and houses along the west side of The Square, with the Church of St. Luke in the centre and to the east of that, Church View. The buildings are set closely together. The surrounding area is agricultural of fields, and gardens associated with the houses in the village.

The oldest structure in the village is the Church of St. Luke. This is said to date from c1430, but with a church on the site dating from the 12th century, built as a chapel of ease, to the Church of St. Mary, Sandbach, five miles away. It was built to accommodate local parishioners of St Mary, living in Holmes Chapel. The building is within a circular churchyard, typically associated with medieval origins. It was originally timber framed, and has had several alterations, notably in the 15th and 18th century. Church Registers date from 1613, with Bishops Transcripts dating from 1597. The church was encased in brick in the 18th century, distinctive for the Flemish bond pattern and long arched windows.

17th Century Holmes Chapel

The village centre was on both a drovers and coaching route. In the late seventeenth century, these transport links assisted in the manufacture and export of iron bars nearby to the north, at Cranage Mill on the River Dane. The Hall and Cotton families, business partners and closely related by marriage, bought substantial houses including The Hermitage and paid for the substantial rebuilding of the parish church in the early eighteenth century. During the Civil War (1643) the Church tower was damaged by musket fire during a struggle between Royalists and Parliamentarians. Evidence of this is still visible, some 400 years later.

18th Century Holmes Chapel

The Red Lion, on The Square, was built in the last third of the 17th century, with John Wesley (1703 – 1791) leader of the Methodist movement, preaching there in 1738 on his way from Oxford to Manchester. No. 3 and 5 Church View were built in the early 18th century. In the mid 18th century (10th July 1753), a large proportion of the 19 buildings in the village were destroyed by fire. The Church, Red Lion and No. 3 and 5 Church View were the only surviving structures standing. This may explain why there are so few listed buildings in the village centre, with most buildings dating from the late 18th and 19th century.

Many new buildings were erected by principal landowners. The Halls of The Hermitage, Goostrey were principal benefactors. There are a number of buildings in Holmes Chapel with a datestone and the initials TBH for Thomas Bayley Hall. The properties were sold after his death in 1828 to other significant landowners, including the Armitsteads.

19th Century Holmes Chapel

The Square remained the heart of the village, and it included a cattle market, fairs and other village celebrations.

In the late 18th and early 19th century, Holmes Chapel was on a coaching route for London. By 1819 London directed over 120 staging coaches to various destinations in the UK. In 1819 the stagecoach to Holmes Chapel departed from The White Horse, Fetters Lane, London. A journey could take many hours, so inns with stabling were essential. The three pubs in the village – The Red Lion, The Bull's Head and The George and Dragon provided these services as coaches from London-Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester route stopped at the village.

In 1828 – 29, The Pigot and Co's Directory described a number of trades in the village at that time. These include Grocers and Tea Dealers, Ironmongers, Linen and Wool Drapers, a Tailor, Cooper and Saddler. Some people were listed as having more than one trade.

The tithe map of 1841 for Holmes Chapel shows a small concentration of buildings around the church and around the crossroads. The core of the village is surrounded by fields. The prominent landowners owning land in the village centre were William Eccles, whose father, also William, married into the Hall family. Other major landowners were the Hodges of Lane Ends House on London Road and the Armitsteads of Cranage Hall, who bought the Hermitage Estate. Nathan Knight, the Devises of Thomas Lowe, Lawrence Armistead and John Plant were others.

The tithe map denotes the tenure of land and the owner and occupier. On the west side of the village, a line of houses and shops are owned by William Eccles, and tenanted by various villagers – Richard Taylor, (Plot 167) a house and shop on the corner, Ann Leigh (Plot 171) – a large plot including a house, garden and plantation, Isaac Gallimore (Plot 175 - a house and garden owned by William Eccles (Plot 175), James Beech (Plot 176) - a house and garden, Thomas Plant (Plot 177) - two houses and garden and Samuel Yarwood (Plot 178 and 179) - a house and two gardens. An exception to this was James Street (Plot 166), who owned and occupied a house, shop and garden. Nathan Knight owned The Red Lion, which was tenanted by Mary Palphreyman.

The village was clearly an important location for obtaining goods and services and benefitted from good road links with surrounding towns and villages. A forge was established by 1840. The site is now an agricultural engineers and farm supplier's store, just outside the conservation area.

The historic coaching routes fell into decline by the 1830's as new, and more direct routes to large towns and cities were established. The Manchester and Birmingham Railway was completed and opened by 1842. As with most railway towns and villages, the railway impacted somewhat on the village, and its inhabitants. The introduction of the railway allowed for increased social mobility, particularly for the middle classes, who could commute to the larger conurbations.

Bagshaw's History and Gazetteer of Cheshire 1850 described Holmes Chapel or Church Hulme as a township, chapelry and large compact village, containing 165 houses in 1841 and 1008 inhabitants. At this time, the church was used by scholars at the Blue Coats school at Cranage. A Methodist Church had been erected. Trade directories record a draper, butcher, bricklayer, surgeon, and blacksmith and agricultural implement maker in the village.

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1882 still shows a nucleated village in a largely rural setting. This has changed a little by 1899, with small pockets of terraces and detached housing along Middlewich Road.



20th century Holmes Chapel

The village is gradually expanding and increasing in density by 1911, with the introduction of Westmoreland Villas, and Bank View on Middlewich Road. Businesses from that period which still have a presence in the conservation area include Mandeville's Bakery (established 1900) on Macclesfield Road,

next to the bank. Morrey's General hardware store, which from 1850 and for many years had a presence in The Square, relocated to Manor Lane in 2014. Two multi-national companies, Sainsbury's and Costa coffee now occupy the building.

Despite its size, significant large businesses located to the village. These included the Holmes Chapel Wallpaper Company, set up in 1911, and Bengers Food Ltd, its head office and factory which was built in 1938, and Fisons, a major pharmaceutical company.

The most significant change to occur to the village centre was the road widening and realignment to the northern end of The Square on Middlewich and Knutsford Road. Prior to the construction of the M6 motorway, the principal route north from London to Glasgow was via the A50, which passed through The Square and around the circular churchyard of St. Luke. The construction of the Staffordshire to Preston section of the M6 in 1963 allowed for increased social mobility. Road widening and realignment resulted in the demolition of the Bulls Head in 1948, and the George and Dragon in 1970. The character of the village changed. Commuting became much easier due to the transport links available. The population grew substantially between 1971 and 1991 when large business relocation and housing development took place. Despite its size, it has a village feel and is located within a rural setting.



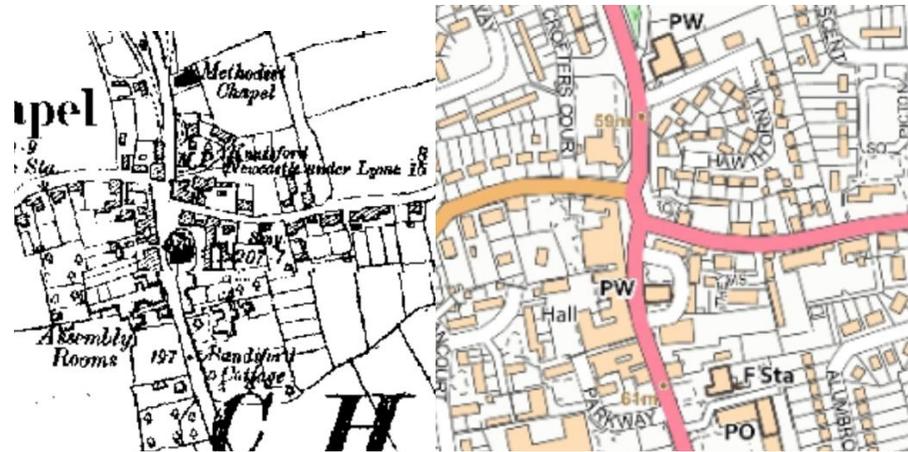


Fig 4. The Tithe Map c.1841, Ordnance Survey Map 1882, 1899, 1911 and present day (Copyright: Cheshire Archives)

3.5 Land Use

The land uses of the area is principally commercial and retail uses, plus banking and ecclesiastic use. There are also a number of houses along Church View and on the west and east perimeters of the conservation area. Historically the land use has not changed, with the village always having an important commercial core around the Church of St. Luke's. However, even when the use has changed – for example from residential to commercial, the built form has not significantly changed as is still legible. The **key landmark building** is the church, which is best appreciated in close views up and down The Square, rather than outside of the conservation area to any significant degree.

The roads are of key importance and provide a through route through the village from west to east at the top of The Square. The Square forms part of a north / south route, but much of the traffic has been re-routed out from the village centre. There are several car parks to support shops in and near to the conservation area. A large car park exists to the west of, and behind the shops on The Square. This is in the conservation area and its character is fairly typical of a car park - functional tarmac surfacing with little in the way of soft landscaping. It is interconnected to narrow walkways and alleys to The Square and to Middlewich Road and as such it very permeable and legible in terms of access to the village centre.

Despite its size, Holmes Chapel Conservation Area has a rich diversity of streets. They range from:

- Principal vehicular routes to the north and south of the conservation area – Middlewich and Macclesfield Road, and London Road.
- Principal pedestrian streets – The Square
- Secondary vehicular streets – The Square
- Alleys, Lanes and Other Pedestrian Links – Church View, Church Walk and minor passageways including the link from Macclesfield Road to Church View.

These tend to be straight, with the extension of Church View, which curves around the sandstone bound churchyard. They also offer key views and important pedestrian movement and activity. The street hierarchy adds to the village character and sense of place.

The key pedestrian walkways provide important views of landmark buildings in the conservation area. This includes the view of the Red Lion from Church Walk, and the view of the church from the alley next to No.16 London Road. These passages that provide a good view of the historic form of the rear of the properties that front The Square.

Road improvements and realignments has meant that the approach to the village centre from the west is almost incidental, until one reaches the roundabout. It is at this point that the impressive tower of St Luke's and the village character is seen and appreciated within a wider village vista.





The vista of the Church of St. Luke. Alleys, including Church Walk create a permeable link to the village centre.



The churchyard, an important green space within the conservation area

3.6 Townscape Character and Spatial Analysis

Holmes Chapel is typical of historic Cheshire villages in that it developed as a group of buildings at a road junction. The street layout has changed a little since the Tithe Map – or example there is a break in the buildings on The Square denoting Church Walk, which becomes more established by 1882 and 1899. Out shuts have appeared to the rear of most of the buildings on the map. Overall, the historic street pattern is retained and the orientation of buildings front on to the street – presenting well defined and well-mannered frontages. Development is dense and mostly terraced on The Square, and typically domestic in scale, with most buildings two storey. There are some exceptions to The Square and Church View, which are 2 and a half to three storeys. This provides a varied roof line, which adds interest to the skyline.



The **western route into the village** on Middlewich Road is slightly curved, with a strong street boundary. Trees, boundary walls and hedgerows contribute to the largely suburban character. The character of the approach and the setting is that of a Victorian and Edwardian suburban. There is a

strong townscape rhythm associated with this type of housing. The distinctive bay windows, narrow pallet of materials, vertical sliding sash windows and almost uniform building and ridge lines are a key feature.

The conservation area boundary is fairly easily recognisable on **the northern side of Middlewich Road**. Victorian semi-detached houses are separated by modern housing by a small open area. This open space is important in terms of creating a small but distinct separation between the historic and modern development.

The urban form changes as one travels towards the village centre and includes Edwardian brick, semi-detached and detached housing. Beyond that is a small terrace of shops. It is two storey but lower in height to the adjacent Victorian housing, and with narrow gables.



There is a gap in the street frontage created by the car park which services the village centre and where the back of Costa Coffee and Sainsbury's are visible. Landscaping here is a little forlorn and there is opportunity to create a stronger frontage.



The crossroads is where the character changes somewhat from suburban development to a distinct village centre, with development and the urban grain being much tighter.



The Church of St Luke is the dominant building and key landmark building, which is central to the conservation area. It is encircled by a small churchyard. Barclays Bank is set back which allows for views of the whole of the church. The density of the built form is softened by trees within the churchyard and there are a variety of scales provided by the low boundary walls, the railings, the trees, the varying roofs and tower, which creates a pleasing juxtaposition with each other.

The linear row of properties along **The Square** has a largely uniform street line and there is a strong street enclosure. There are varying degrees of heights, although most are two storey. The three storey buildings rise above an otherwise fairly uniform pitched roof line, and the road looks straight on the map, but curves slightly when viewed from the roundabout and from further north along Knutsford Road. The buildings essentially frame the Church, providing the backdrop and setting.

The Square has a **tight knit grain** and some narrow frontages. There is limited rhythm but there is a coherent built form, created by continuous blocks creating back of pavement building lines, similar building ages and styles, consistency of scale and a similar palette of materials. These blocks are occasionally broken by pedestrian alleyways.



Behind the Square is the car park and back of house area. While the main street has frontages with well-maintained elevations, behind lies areas that are secondary on character and are not distinctive to Holmes Chapel. Of particular note is The Co-op, which has an uninspired back of house style and half-hearted Mansard type roof form that detracts from the conservation area.

The approach from the south along London Road is framed by mature trees. The view of the Church of St Luke is created by its dominant tower and road alignment, which curves slightly. The boundary of the conservation area is clearly defined by its historic buildings on the edge of the conservation area. The grain here is quite loose, and there is a consistency of scale and height. This is quite a bustling thoroughfare.

Church View

Church View is different in character to the east of the conservation area. Despite its proximity to the Square and the bustling thoroughfare, the character of Church View is tranquil, created in part by its proximity to the church and its circular graveyard, which contributes to its essential setting. All of the listed buildings are concentrated in this area and as a consequence it has a very high townscape character. The buildings are varied in height and scale with good quality Georgian town house and early 19th century cottages lining the lane. The enclosure of this narrow lane by the houses and the red sandstone church yard wall add to the intimacy and peacefulness. Small paving and lack of pavements contribute to the domestic village character and charming and informal townscape.



Church Walk

Church Walk is a narrow pedestrian alley, lined with 19th and 20th century offices on either side. It has a strong sense of enclosure created by a tight and linear back of pavement building line. It has many active frontages, pleasing rhythm created solely by colourful doors and projecting curved windows. It is quite different in character to The Square because of the lack of brick-built shops and grain of development which give it a

traffic, and the single storey shops which give it a distinctly human scale. The frontages are all similar. It is separated from Church House Parkway by a car access point into the car park. Its strongly linear building form continues. The character here is different but there is some uniformity in shopfront design. The public realm is patched tarmac and would benefit greatly from a good quality landscaping scheme.



The approach from the **east on the A535** has a greater variety of building types and ages, and wide verges. The enclosure created by buildings along each side of the road is lost. This is also exacerbated by the removal of boundary walls, and areas of high solid timber fencing along the street boundary line, which loses the character and solid lines created by brick and sandstone boundary walls. There are houses and agricultural style buildings here, which demonstrate the historic agricultural dominated character of the village centre. The open space next to Mandeville's bakery would benefit from redevelopment. Mandeville's Bakers provides a clear and defined boundary to the conservation area on the south side of the road. It has a strong character, created by its traditional windows, and symmetry and proportion to the frontage created by its double fronted shop windows.

3.7 Typical Material and Details

The **predominant building material** is the local Cheshire brick. Many brick-built houses have stone detailing to the windows and as keystones to door surround, within brick arches. Many Victorian properties have painted stone sills, and a small number also have inverted stone lintels. There are a small

number of rendered buildings. Bricks are generally mixed shades of red, typical of 'Cheshire' bricks, some Flemish Bond brickwork is polychromatic, and there are one or two instances of brick banding in a dark blue engineering brick. Roofs are generally slate, and chimneys are brick. Timber is used selectively for decoration for example in the form of bargeboards, fascia's and historic shopfront details such as consoles, and pilasters. Red sandstone has been used for the Church tower and graveyard walls, and one or two domestic boundary walls. Other garden walls are of brick with stone coping.

3.8 Landscape Character and Public Realm

There has been some sensitive **public realm works** in Holmes Chapel. Ashlar Yorkstone paving has been used to the north of The Square, and cobbled setts have been introduced on the crossroads here. Herringbone patterned small pavers in a variety of warm pinks and purple have been laid in Church View to create a shared surface. This further enhances this area's unique sense of place. There are some areas that are tarmacked, including in particular, Church Walk, which detracts from its character.

Street furniture includes small traditional cast iron style bollards and streetlights which add character to the area.

Adjacent to the conservation area is a small area of open space at the road junction of The Square on Macclesfield Road. This area has been well landscaped but is now looking a little tired. The tarmac pavement setting detracts somewhat. A small area of open space adjacent to Barclays Bank is enriched with a variety of flowers and strongly enhances its village character.

The **key green open space** in the conservation area is the circular churchyard of St. Luke. This is quite a generous size, but because of the height, scale and mass of the church it looks almost incidental. Its grass and tree cover is critical to the character of the conservation area, providing relief against the dense built form. The sandstone boundary wall and associated railings are of key importance.



The Church of St. Luke and its churchyard



The public realm in Holmes Chapel Conservation Area

The number and diversity of mature trees in and on the approach roads into the conservation area is also important to the character of Holmes Chapel. A number of Tree Protection Orders are in place to specifically protect individual trees as well as some groups: these include those on Knutsford Road adjacent to the George and Dragon, and on London Road close to the Village Centre and library. These frame the approaches in the village centre and conservation area.



View down London Road

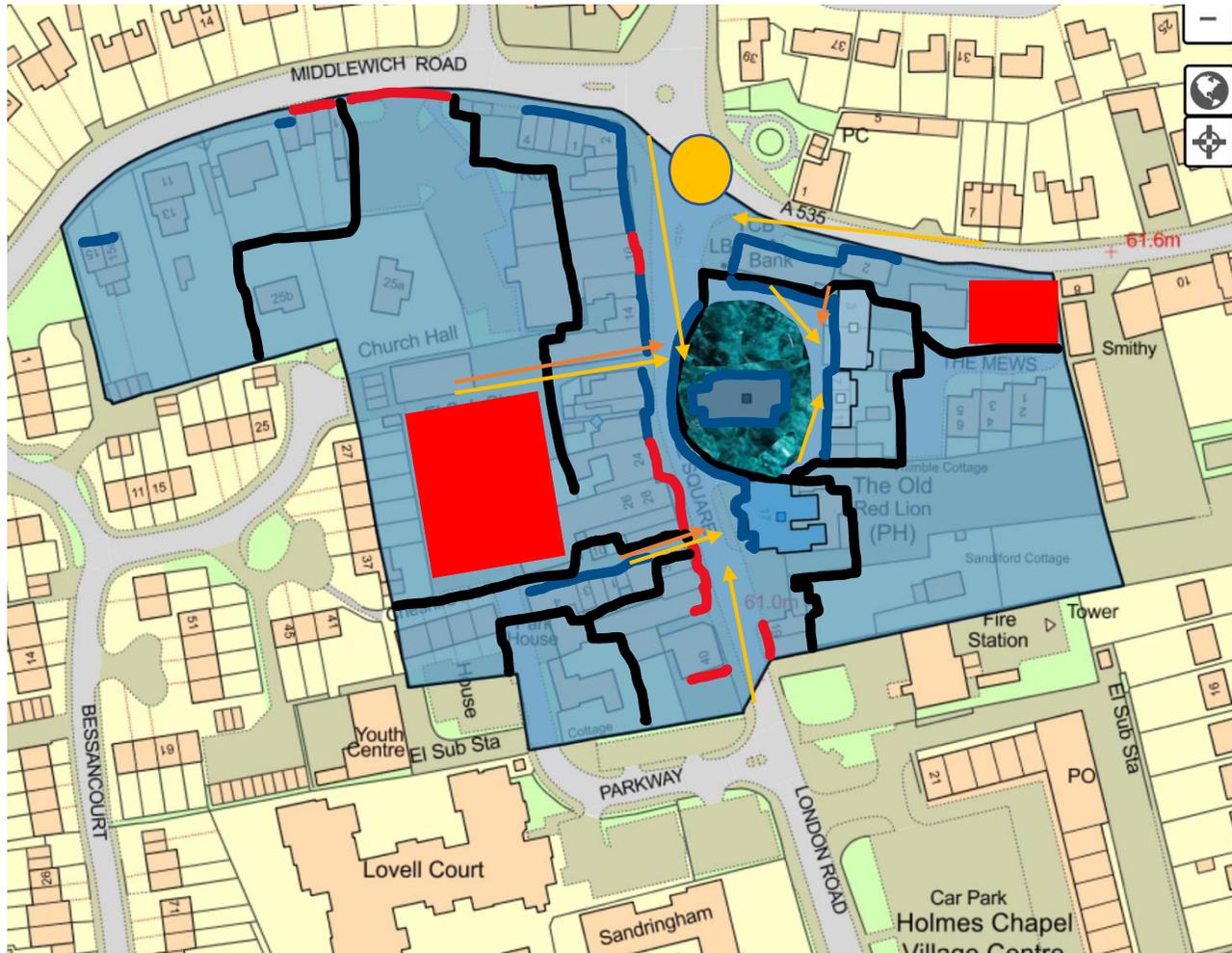


Fig. 5 Townscape and Landscape Analysis Map - Key:

- frontage,
- pedestrian link,
- key view,
- pedestrian link,
- important open space,
- strong gateway
- negative environment / weak

4.0 Architectural Quality and Built Form

4.1 Introduction

There are several historic architectural styles within the Conservation Area. Georgian and Victorian are clearly evident, but there are some simple vernacular cottages on Church View, and Victorian and Edwardian buildings along Middlewich Road. These are two or three storey in height, from 1-3 bays in width, but all of them face the street. Their architectural features define the façade's character, and there is little embellishment. Window and door design is therefore of key importance to their character.

Domestic buildings on Macclesfield Road sit in plots with small front gardens. The street boundaries are uniform, and hedgerows sit on top of low brick boundary walls. Following the abolition of the Window Tax in 1851, the increased use of glass allowed for the bay window. The semi-detached buildings have canted bay windows at ground floor level, which probably historically had a hipped slate roof, and doors with brick arches and arched fanlights above the door, both of which are a traditional Victorian feature. Gable end chimneys and traditional slate roofs are an important feature. Windows were originally timber and set into the window reveal by at least half a brick, rather than flush to the face of the building which creates a very flat frontage.



Domestic buildings in Church View include lovely examples of Georgian architecture dating from the early 18th century. No. 3 and 5 Church View. Features include a symmetrical frontage, keystones positioned centrally above windows, stone lintels, vertical window proportions, small windowpanes, panelled front doors with white architraves to give the entrance definition and status, with square fanlights above. Flemish Bond brickwork adds to the character.

No. 7, 9 and 11 Church View date from the early 19 century but the very tall, central, chimney stack suggests an earlier 17th century core. These have a simple 19th century cottage exterior, with flush casement windows evident to the first floor, and simple doors, which are 1930's in style.



No. 7, 9 and 11 Church View; No. 3 and 5 Church View; Flemish bond brickwork and stone is used economically for keystones above the window to No's 3 and 5 Church View, within the gauged arched brick lintel. Note the segmented headed 12 pane sash window. Its frame, which has exposed weight boxes, is black, contrasting with the white sash, which is a good regional feature. The doors have eaved architraves.

Commercial buildings - A small terrace of shops on Middlewich Road includes an original shopfront (No. 7) with a cornice, pilasters and console brackets. The narrow fascia to this shop front is a good example of scale and proportion to the building's overall façade. All windows to the upper floors

are uPVC and almost flush to the face of the façade. Suitable window replacements may be a small paned sliding sash or flush casements. The low ridge line, and building line is followed through to the terrace of Victorian style cottages and the shops at the junction of the crossroads and The Square. Chimneys are absent, which makes a flat roofline. These would benefit from reinstatement. Signage would benefit from rationalisation in terms of proportion and materials. This would still allow for each business's bespoke and unique design.



Possible window replacement options to the upper floor

An older building, which has been re-fronted in a Georgian style, with later Victorian detailing, is The Red Lion, a building dating from the late 17th century on The Square. It is a prominent building, located next to the Church and forming part of the boundary of Church Walk. It is listed Grade II*,

and is rendered, which creates a warm contrast with other brick buildings nearby, and the sandstone to the Church of St. Luke. It has vertically aligned windows, with a two-storey gabled porch to the front in the vernacular revival style. It has a variety of sash windows, which have not really changed since the 19th century. It



The Red Lion in 2021, and in the 19th century. The timber framing to the gable is decorative and not structural, which is a feature of the vernacular revival, seen in places like Chester. It has gable end chimney stacks, and a central stack with pots on, which is part of the roofscape. The colours used are warm heritage colours which enhances the building. Signage is discreet and comprises a simple hanging sign and lettering to the façade, which is proportionate to the building.

The **commercial buildings** lining The Square have a uniformity which is generally replicated along the street. Most are Victorian, with key features including horned sash windows at first floor level. Victorian windows have fewer glazing bars than Georgian windows because of improvements to glass making. This allowed for cheaper, larger, stronger panes of glass, which needed fewer glazing bars.

The first floors are generally consistent in terms of similar detailing and proportions although several original sliding sash first floor windows have been replaced with modern windows, which erode the Victorian character of the building. Frontages are generally active and enrich the street character, but one or two, such as No. 24 London Road, would benefit from further works to enhance this lively scene, such as a new shop front, signage, and clearly defined entrance. Roofs are occasionally punctuated with chimneys which add interest and create a varied skyline. The majority of the buildings are mid Victorian in appearance and character.



Examples of window replacements from traditional 2 over 2 paned sash windows to plastic. There are a number of original sliding sash windows in the conservation area at first floor level, which are important features of the conservation area and should be retained.

There is a consistency to these buildings in terms of materials, features, character and rhythm, which is replicated along Church Walk, albeit in a modern style. The plots to both are narrow, and buildings to some corners 'book-end' the terrace, providing articulation at ground floor level in the form of door openings.

Barclays Bank, a purpose-built banking hall, is set slightly back, but the landscaping to its frontage along the A535 creates relief in the street scape. Its horizontal form is punctuated by long banking hall windows to its primary façade, reducing in scale to the secondary façade on the A535. The roof forms to the building are pitched and simple to the secondary section of the building, and a more complicated pyramid roof, with a façade that has neoclassical overtones as its primary frontage. It is a well-designed building that adds to the character of the village, yet very different in appearance to other buildings in the village

Building facades to commercial premises in the conservation area are generally plain, with little variety in terms of embellishment, which is mostly provided by vertical windows at first and second floor level, and shop fronts and signage at ground floor. Most shop fronts take up the entire ground floor frontage. There are a huge variety of shop fronts ranging from the original (Farrell Cleaners) to the incidental (No. 2 The Square). The key issues relate to proportion and scale in relation to the host building. A large undistinguished conservatory has been erected to the entire south facing ground floor façade of No. 40 The Square, disguising its double fronted mid-Victorian character.

Some **shop fronts**, whilst modern, have proportions that suit the host building. These include narrow pilasters and fascia's, perhaps with a slight projection but integral to the shopfront design. Stallrisers tend to be low and are similar in height to the bottom rail of the door. Some shop windows are divided into smaller panes, while others have larger picture windows. This creates a strong horizontal emphasis, particularly when the shop front and fascia is painted the same colour. The ground and first floor are further enhanced when upper floors window frames are painted the same colour as the shop front. However, frames and sashes don't necessarily have to be painted the same colour – they can be painted contrasting, complementary colours.



There are few **recessed doorways** but where they exist, they play an important part on the townscape rhythm, and create an important aesthetic in the shopfront. There are some notable larger frontages. These relate to Sainsbury's, Costa Coffee, Gascoigne Halman and the Co-Op. What is generally

successful about these shop fronts is the recessed doorways to Costa Coffee and The Co-op, and the overall proportions of the shopfront and fascia to Gascoigne Halman. What is rather less successful is blank frontages and flush sliding doors, which is particularly evident to Sainsbury's, and to the Co-op on Church Walk.

Some buildings have large shop windows at ground floor and smaller windows at first floor level. These include Mandeville bakery which has flush wooden casements, with a keystone detail to the inverted style lintel. This is a traditional window type that is of importance to the building and area's character.

A shopfront of note is the butchers. This has a tiled fascia and traditional awning that overall suits the building. There are some minor design amendments that could be made, such as the removal of the large metal edge to the awning, but it retains its traditional character.



Signage is a key issue in the conservation area. Due to the independent nature of the small business, there is a huge variety of signage. The support of independent businesses and of their own branding is of key importance. However, successful signage should reflect the host building and style of

shopfront and should contribute to the good examples in the wider townscape. High quality signage will lift a retail area. Fascia sizes differ in size, the least successful being ones that are too wide and deep for the frontage. Signage that is too large or overbearing can have the opposite effect of what the business is trying to achieve. Hand painted lettering, with letters that are proportionate to the fascia should be encouraged. V-cut letters and applied letters are also acceptable. Proportion and quality is key.

Hanging signs are a positive feature in principle but their design is critical. Good quality, robust materials in either timber or powder coated metal or authentic brackets should be encouraged. Section details are important. The location of these signs require careful consideration. Well designed and high-quality pictorial and three-dimensional hanging signs should be encouraged.

A-boards create clutter in the street scene and are particularly difficult to navigate for those who have mobility issues. These should not be used.

Good examples of signage include Farrell Cleaners in terms of overall proportion and design, the Dog Grooming Salon, Costa, Gascoigne Halman.

Contrasting and harmonious colours between the fascia and the letters, using a carefully chosen combination of heritage colours can be effective in picking out architectural details and creating string signage, whilst retaining brand image for independent retailers.



Good examples of signage in Holmes Chapel, proportionate lettering and fasciae, heritage colours

4.2 Listed Buildings

A listed building is a building that has been placed on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. There are 7 listed buildings within the Holmes Chapel Conservation Area. These include the church and domestic properties on Church Walk, of which some are listed as one.



The Church of St Luke (Grade I), The Red Lion (Grade II*), No. 3 and 5 Church View (Grade II)



No. 7, 9 and 11 Church View (Grade II)

4.3 Buildings and Structures of Townscape Merit

A number of unlisted buildings were identified having townscape value. These buildings are not significant to be listed through national and statutory designations, but local authorities may formally identify heritage assets that are important to the area, for example through local listing, as part of the plan making process or during the decision-making process. A local list recognises and identifies buildings, sites and spaces that help build a sense of local identity and distinctiveness, a sense of history place and belonging, but that are not statutory listed.

The following buildings and structures in the Conservation Area and extensions are an initial set of possible nominations for a future local list. These suggestions should not pre-judge the process for the creation of a local list as described in the management plan. However, they have been assessed using criteria from Local Heritage Listing: Historic England Advice Note 7 (2nd Ed) January 2021, and the CEC criteria. They have been chosen for completeness of historic interest and aesthetic value.

No. 1 The Square – Barclays Bank a neoclassical banking hall designed for a village context, with strong articulation to the frontage.



No. 2, 4,6 The Square – late 18th / early 19th corner building with traditional windows and articulation to the corner.

No. 22 The Square – Farrall Cleaners – traditional shopfront and original first floor windows



No. 36 The Square – Mid Victorian building with canted bay window at first floor and well -proportioned shopfront and signage.

No. 14 The Square – good shopfront and fascia with original first floor windows and large central stack.



No. 2 Macclesfield Road, Manderville Grocer and Baker – a symmetrical and well-proportioned building frontage, with traditional casements to the upper floor and good signage. Also, telephone call box.

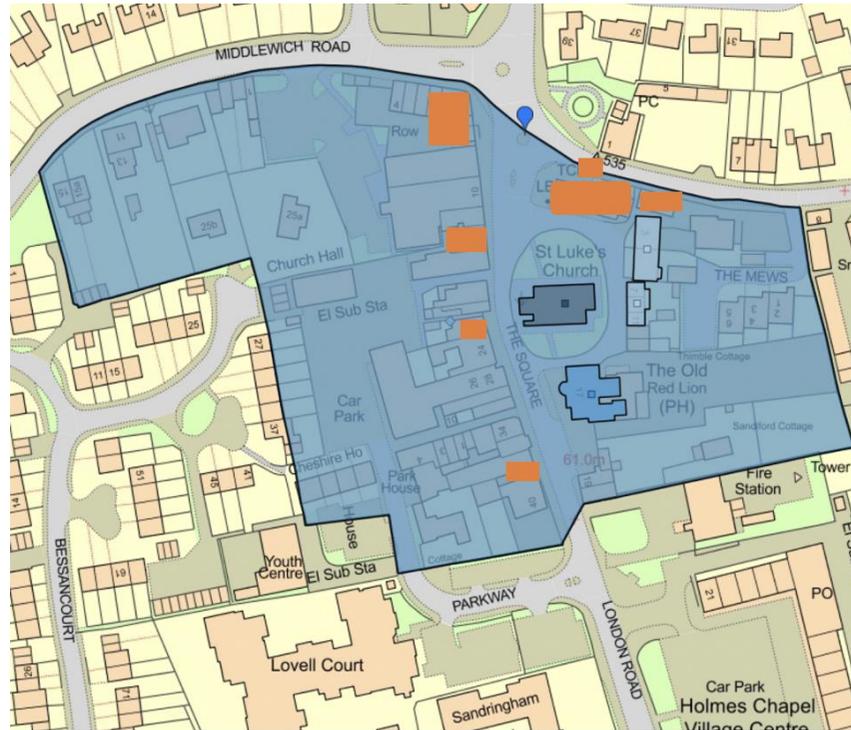


Fig 5. Heritage Assets Map – Grey (Grade I), Dark Blue (Grade II*), Light Blue (Grade II), Proposed buildings of townscape merit (orange)

5.0 Assessment of Condition

5.1 General Condition

The general condition of the existing Conservation Area is very good. Conservation policy works well to some degree, but signage and uPVC alterations let the area down. Most of the buildings are commercial and therefore do not enjoy any permitted development rights. Planning permission should therefore be sought for changes that would result in a material change in the appearance.

In some of the areas which have been considered as extensions there are unsurprisingly more issues, particularly with inappropriate doors and windows, skylights and development which does not respect the character of the area; these have been included in the following discussion.

5.2 Key Detractors

1. Modern replacement windows to upper floors, which is particularly notable on The Square and to terraces on Middlewich Road.
2. Oversized fascia's and lettering
3. Proliferation of shop signs to buildings
4. Poor quality trough lighting above signage
5. The use of non-traditional materials, which are at odds with the host building ,such as uPVC.
6. Over engineered ramps to main entrances.
7. The rear of the Co-op is particularly detrimental, designed with little thought to context.
8. Poor quality public realm to key pedestrian areas, notably railings to Church House, Parkway, Church Walk and the entry from Macclesfield Road to Church View.
9. Lack of landscaping to the car park behind The Square.

5.3 Capacity for Change

1. Business signage

2. Reinstating traditional or timber windows and doors and removing uPVC and / or modern timber opening replacements. This would be particularly beneficial when properties form part of a group. Appropriate styles within the Conservation Area are timber sliding sash or side opening casement windows.
3. Retaining traditional building materials appropriate to the building age, style and character - cast iron guttering, slate, timber windows and removing features and extensions that are clearly unsuited to the building.
4. The opportunity should be taken to enhance the public realm and pedestrian environment to key pedestrian routes, in particular Church Walk.

6.0 Boundary Changes

The Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the NPPF and best practice guidance produced by Historic England all state that the boundaries of existing conservation areas should be kept under review. Parts which are no longer special should be excluded. Where drawn too tightly, the Conservation Area should be extended to include more recent phases or plots associated with buildings of historic interest.

It is now recognised that conservation area boundaries need to be seen within a wider context of urban development. Designated areas should provide protection to buildings that were perhaps not previously considered to be of architectural merit and to the spaces between buildings, such as streets and neutral areas. It is also the case that further information can come to light about the historic importance of buildings and spaces.

Taking this into account, it is proposed that the Conservation Area boundary be extended from its existing boundaries to include the area outlined on the map below. as is shown on the map below. The individual extensions are described and identified in the map below and following text:

- Extension: Open space, restaurant, housing and former smithy area on the A535. This is an integral part of the current setting with historic, evidential and aesthetic interest.
- Removal of buildings: The removal of rear gardens at Bessancourt forming the boundary to the car park behind The Square. The boundary here is somewhat arbitrary

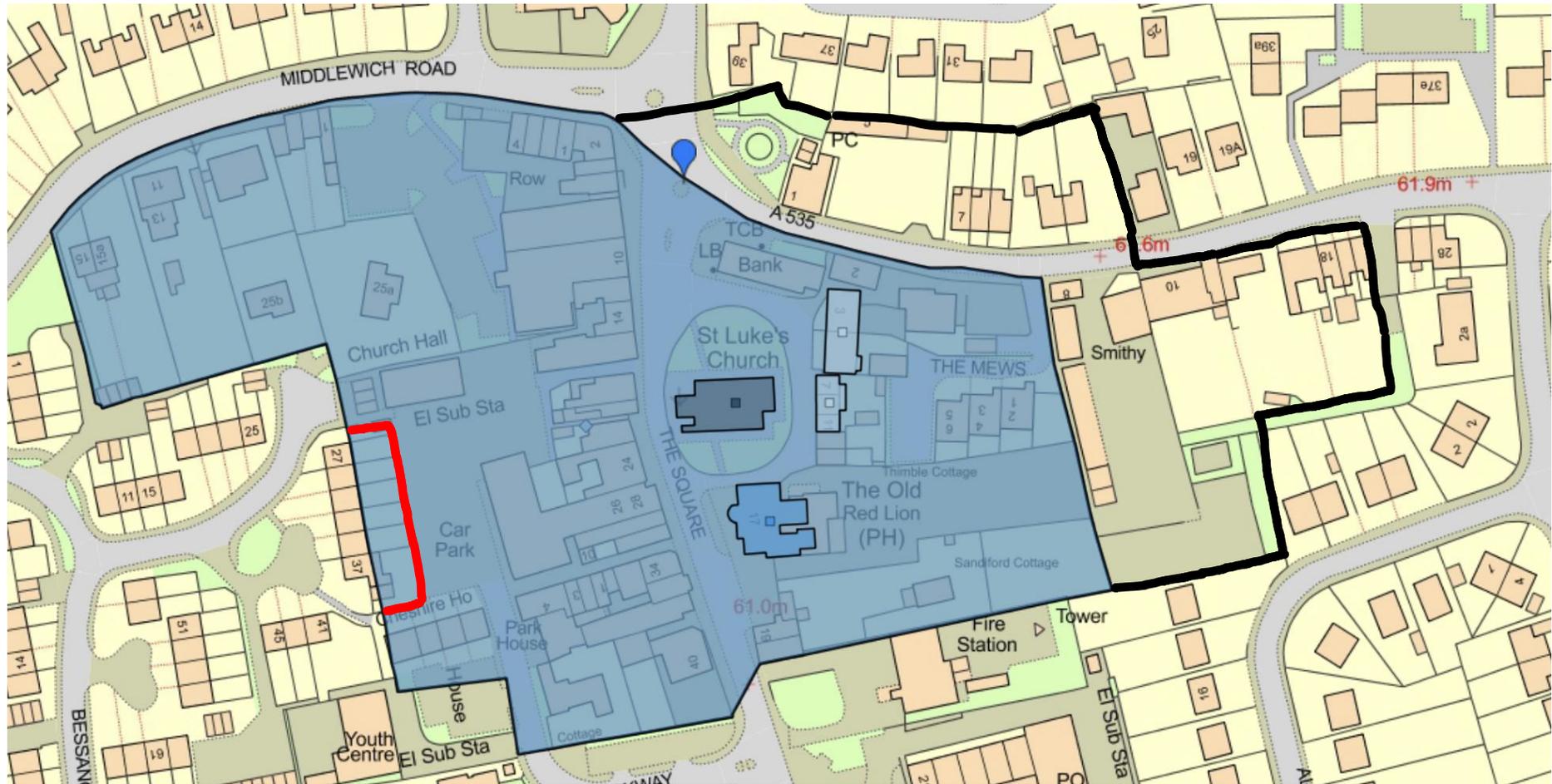


Fig 6. : Proposed Alteration of Holmes Chapel Conservation Area (Red – exclude / black – include)



Buildings in the proposed revised boundary

7.0 Summary – Character Assessment

The overall character of Holmes Chapel conservation area remains strong. The historic core retains its special architectural and historic interest and its character and appearance remains significant, with a unique sense of place defined by buildings situated around the Church of St. Luke. It is in good condition, but improvements can be made to strengthen and enhance its character, and better reveal its significance.

- Critical** – of key importance, defining the distinct character of the conservation area
- Positive** – contributes strongly and positively to the character of the conservation area
- Neutral** – neither positive nor negative features that contribute to the conservation area
- Negative** – detracting from the character of the conservation area

In terms of significance, it can be defined as follows: -

- HC1. The Square** **Positive** - the historic core of the village. This incorporates the buildings facing The Square
- HC2. Church View** **Critical** – a narrow lane behind and including the Church of St Luke
- HC3. Church Walk** **Positive** - a narrow alleyway or ginnel
- HC4. Middlewich Road** **Positive** - traditional housing along Middlewich Road
- HC5. Modern development** **Neutral / Negative** - this includes The Mews, Parkway, and the car park behind The Square off Middlewich Road.

Conservation Area extension **Positive** - this is an integral part of the current setting with historic, evidential and aesthetic interest.

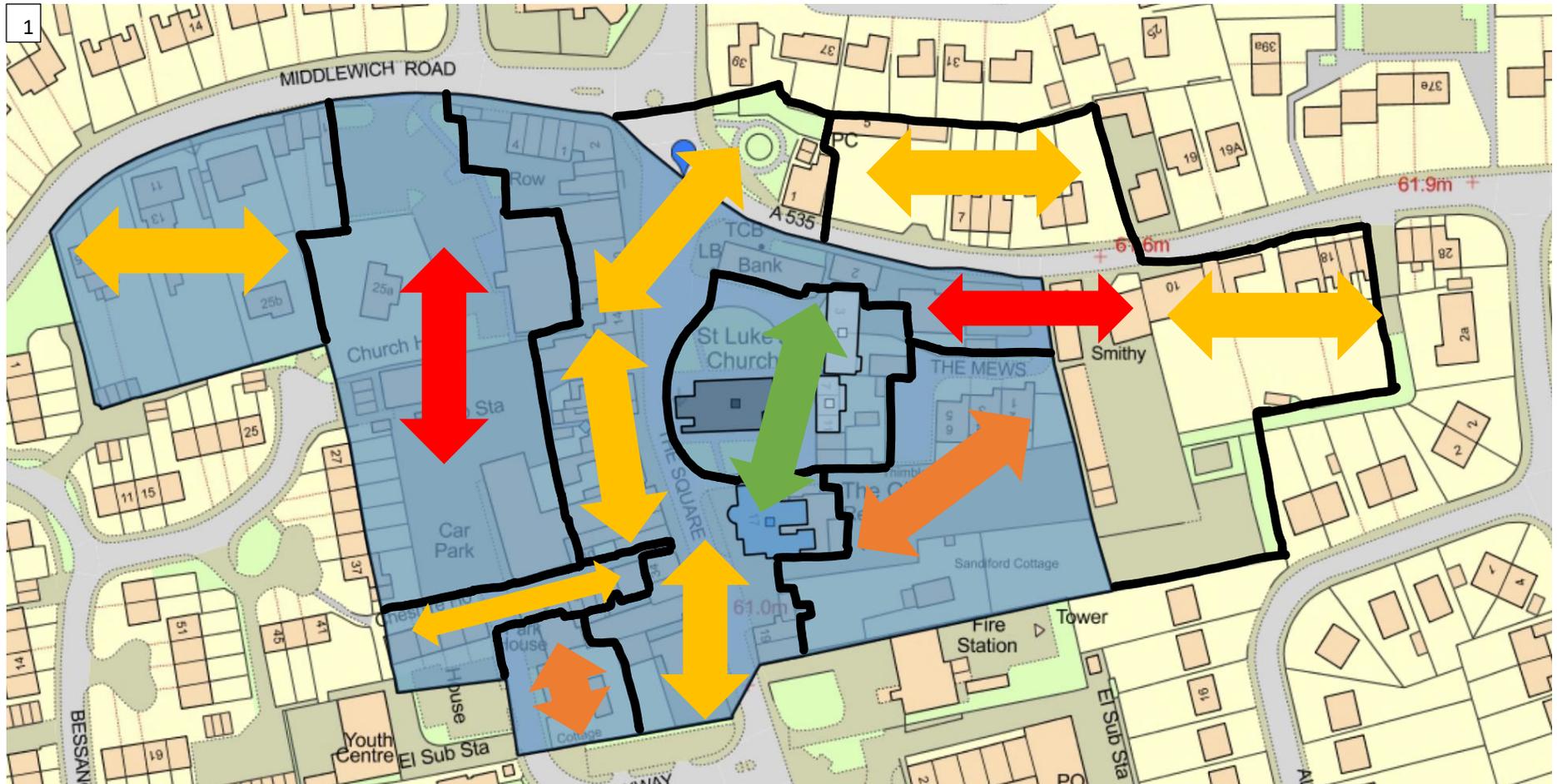


Fig 7. Character Assessment - Key Green – Critical; Yellow - Positive, Orange - Neutral, Red - Negative

8.0 Management and Policy Recommendations

Below is a summary of the issues and pressures within the Conservation Area that will be addressed in the management plan.

- For signage to be successful, it should provide three functions: -
 - It should reflect the host building and style of shopfront
 - It should respect and enhance the wider townscape
 - It should respect the style of the retailer
- Signage should reflect the character of the host building. It should be noted that the fascia, which is usually below the cornice and used to display the shop sign or letters, is a key component of a shop front. The size and design will depend on the period of construction; 18th- and early 19th-century shops have narrow fascia's, later 19th- and early 20th-century shops often have deeper, more elaborate designs.
- Fascia's should be proportionate to the size of the frontage of the building and be of quality materials.
- Hanging signs are welcome. Locations should be specified.
- Console brackets should be retained where they exist. Proportionate pilasters are important and may be decorative or plain.
- Retain or create lobbies where there is space to do so. Early to mid-Victorian shopfront lobbies are generally square.
- Active frontages are important. Shopfronts should ideally reflect the character of the host building. In order to retain variety, shop fronts should not be uniform. There should be variation in glazing and proportion.
- Public realm improvements should introduce a locally distinctive palette of materials, that should reflect the street hierarchy that exists within the conservation area
- Create a public realm guide for the village centre
- Ensure that any new development within the Conservation Area or the within the setting of the Conservation Area preserves and enhances the character of the Conservation Area.
- Consider introducing an Article Four Direction for housing
- Provide supplementary planning guidance on shopfronts, signage and windows
- Create a two-yearly photographic record
- Historic England guidance on energy efficiency will assist shop and homeowners to balance heritage considerations with emerging energy efficiency requirements.

Sources

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Holmes Chapel U3A Local History Group

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