

Sandbach Conversion Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan



Working Draft

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Part 1 CHARACTER APPRAISAL



*St Mary's Church from
pathway off High Street*

1 Introduction and purpose

Conservation Areas were introduced in 1967 as a consequence of the Civic Amenities Act and are now an established and valued element of the planning process. A Conservation Area is an area of “special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”¹.

More recent legislation has expanded on these early principles, and Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 obliges local planning authorities to determine which parts of their areas are of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as Conservation Areas. Section 72 of the same Act also specifies that it is the general duty of local planning authorities, in the exercise of their planning functions, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of these Conservation Areas.

Consequently, the purpose of a Conservation Area is to protect the special character of an area, the character of which is derived from the interrelationship between its constituent elements: buildings, uses, street patterns, spaces, views and vistas, landmarks, landscape features, public realm, materials, detailing, setting and potentially other elements including its social historical context. Each place is unique, and therefore, the characteristics that define it and which make it special and its capacity to accept change need to be understood in order to positively manage its future.

Why is a review required?

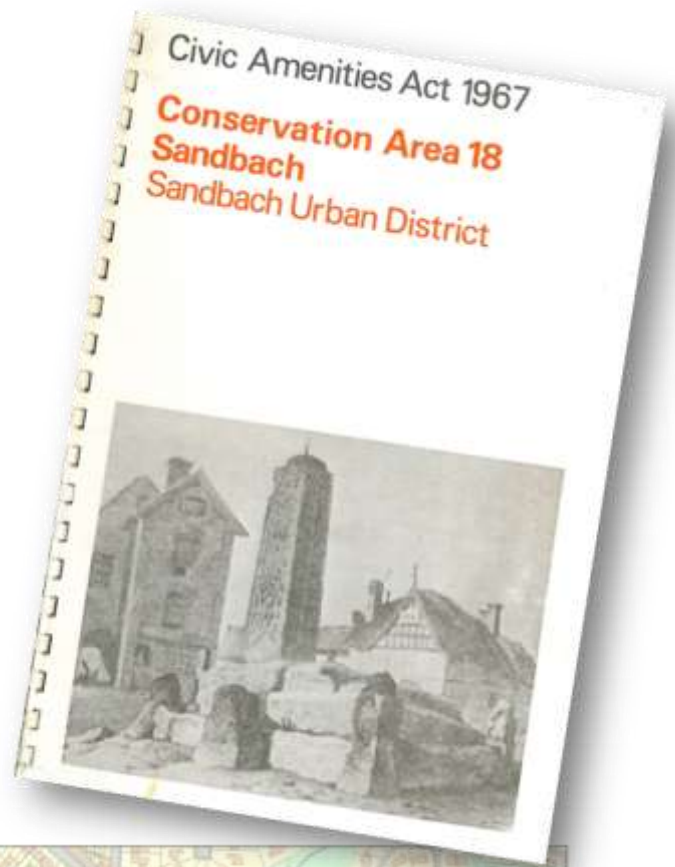
The Sandbach Conservation Area was first designated in 1970 and included the area around St Mary’s Church and Market Square. It has since been extended, firstly in 1976 to take in the Hightown area, and then in 1995 taking in Welles Street, Green Street, Bold Street, Chapel Street and Wesley Avenue. Only the original Conservation Area, which focused on the medieval heart of the town, has an appraisal document, but this is many years old and does not meet present day requirements.

When the extensions to the Conservation Area were undertaken, only very concise justifications were provided and no updated or new appraisals were produced, as they were just felt worthy of inclusion. The Conservation Area is also split into the main area and a smaller section, with the area west of Wesley Avenue separated from the remainder. This means that the elements of significance for much of the conservation area are not set out and there are no up to date management proposals for the conservation area. Consequently a review is long overdue.



Photos of the 3 areas that make up the conservation area

¹ Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990, S.69 (1)



Right: the existing Sandbach conservation area appraisal document, produced when the area was first designated in 1970 and covering approximately a third of the presently designated area

Above: areas of the conservation area that presently do not benefit from a character appraisal or management strategy



Map 1: The current conservation area boundary identifying the different phases of designation

The Purpose and Scope of this Appraisal

This appraisal is one of an ongoing programme of appraisals for conservation areas across Cheshire East.

The purpose of the character appraisal is to help summarise and explain the special character of the area and to set out principles and proposals to assist in its future management. Conservation Area management is not about preventing change but more about managing it in an informed way. Importantly, the aim is for positive management to try and harness the pressures for change, and, in the process, to make the conservation area more resilient to potential economic decline and lack of investment. It also provides an evidence base and management proposals that can be used to secure inward investment within the conservation area.

Given the period of time since designation, the appraisal will also assist the Council in deciding whether the conservation area or certain parts of it still retain sufficient special interest to warrant inclusion, by recording and evaluating the special interest as it exists today, taking account of how events since designation have affected the character of the area. It will also allow the opportunity to consider whether areas previously omitted should now be included, as conservation theory and practice has evolved since the time of designation. Townscape once deemed to be of no significance may now be considered to have a special character worthy of designation, or it may warrant consideration in terms of how it influences the existing Conservation Area (such as affecting its setting).

This information will comprise of descriptive text supported by photographs, maps and other graphical material. It will also identify opportunities for future enhancement and preservation of elements of significance within the conservation areas, which will provide a basis for its positive management.

To be successful, the appraisal must be prepared in consultation with the many interests involved in the conservation area's future. Consequently, this appraisal has been prepared in close discussion with the Town Council, the Sandbach Conservation and Heritage Group and by engaging with other stakeholders, including English Heritage and through community consultation.

In order to be as effective as possible, to enable ease of future review and to provide a vehicle for conservation led regeneration, the appraisal and management proposals should be as focused and as practical and concise as possible.

Whilst this appraisal seeks to assess the area's special architectural and historic interest as comprehensively as possible, it cannot cover the minutiae of all issues. Consequently, any omission of a particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it has no value or interest. The appraisal is the starting point; any development proposals within or in proximity to the conservation area should fully consider the implications upon it, having regard to national and local policies and the wider objectives of the character appraisal and management plan. Such proposals should be informed by a level of conservation assessment commensurate with the scale of the project.

The appraisal is also an important snapshot in time, which in due course will inform future assessment and management as a record of the issues that affected and shaped the conservation area in the early 21st century.

2 Planning Policy Context

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72 of this Act relates to the fact that in determining a planning application, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. This document should be read in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The NPPF sets out how the Government intends to deliver sustainable development through the planning process. It expressly states that sustainable development is about achieving positive growth, balancing economic, environmental and social considerations. There is little doubt that the NPPF is pro development, with a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development. However, the framework also recognises the finite nature and value of our built heritage and the need for this to be properly assessed and where appropriate protected in a manner commensurate with the sensitivity of the heritage asset. Conservation areas are termed designated heritage assets in the Framework. Consequently their importance is elevated by this designation.

Sections 7 and 12 of the NPPF set out the main policies in respect to the historic environment and achieving high quality design. The key messages are:

- Local planning authorities should set out in the Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment
- The value of the historic environment in creating sustainable and viable communities, including the benefits to the local economy
- When considering the designation of conservation areas, the area's special architectural or historic interest should justify designation, otherwise the concept is de-valued
- When considering the impact of proposals on a designated heritage asset great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Substantial harm should be exceptional, whilst less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development
- In conservation areas and within their setting, there are opportunities for new development to enhance or better reveal their significance (such as by replacing inappropriate development or enhancing key spaces and views)
- Not all parts of the conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. However, loss of a building or structure that contributes to the significance of the conservation area will amount to substantial or less than substantial harm, taking into account the impact upon significance of the conservation area as a whole
- Design mediocrity has reduced confidence in new development
- Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning
- Securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations
- Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities presented by a site
- Where a degree of special protection to protect amenity is required then an Area of Special Control Order may be approved (there is a requirement to consult with local trade and amenity organisations)
- Planning policies and decisions should not seek to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative, but it is appropriate to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness
- Poorly placed advertisements can have a negative impact on the appearance of the built and natural environment

The Borough Council has a statutory duty to review its conservation area designations, to consider any new areas from time to time, and to formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement

At present, the policies relating to conservation areas are contained within the saved policies of the Congleton Borough Local Plan. A new Cheshire East wide Local Plan is being prepared but at the

time of writing this appraisal, no specific Development Management policies are in place. Draft Development Strategy and Emerging Policy Principles have been consulted upon, the latter of which identifies the policy principles that will provide the basis for strategic policies in Cheshire East. The Core Strategy will be consulted upon in October/November 2013. This includes a positive strategy towards heritage conservation and achieving design quality as part of reinforcing the unique character of Cheshire East. It also aims to strengthen quality of life in the Borough whilst also delivering sustainable development.

However, for the time being, the saved policies form the basis for determining planning applications in these areas alongside the NPPF. Consequently, for the time being, this appraisal should be read in conjunction with the following policies.

The key saved policies on the historic built environment in the Congleton Borough Local Plan are:

GR1 Design policies for new development
GR2 Design
BH2 Demolition of listed buildings
BH3 Change of use or conversion of listed buildings
BH4 The effect of development on listed buildings and their setting
BH5 The effect of development on historic environment assets
BH6 Non-statutory list of buildings and structures of architectural and historic interest
BH8 Conservation area boundary designation, extension and alteration
BH9 Proposals for development affecting conservations areas
BH10 Demolition of buildings within conservation areas
BH11 Development affecting sites scheduled ancient monuments
BH12 Development affecting sites of archaeological significance
S11 New shop fronts and alterations to existing shop fronts
S12 Installation of solid lath/similar security shutters
S13 Installation of lattice/mesh grille security shutters
S14 Advertisement policies in general
S15 Advertisements in conservation areas
S16 Environmental improvements and traffic management

The new Cheshire East Local Plan

The Council has recently consulted upon the Draft Development Strategy and Emerging Policy Principles and these will inform the Core Strategy of the Local Plan. At the time of writing this appraisal the Core Strategy is being written. This document will translate the policy requirements of the NPPF at the local level. Specific sections of Core Strategy will set out the policy requirements in relation to both design and building conservation, supplemented by the future site allocations and Development Management Policies and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Key policy messages in relation to built heritage and design are:

- That conservation area designation does not mean 'preserve in aspic', as there is scope for positive development to preserve or enhance the conservation area
- Positive management of the area's built heritage is important from an economic as well as an environmental perspective, but especially in terms of preserving Cheshire East's unique character
- That high quality design is indivisible from good planning and that it is fundamental to sustainable development (in particular reinforcing sense of place in historic settings)
- Good conservation practice does not stifle design innovation but it should be shaped by the local context

- Achieving good design is not just the aesthetic quality but also how the development performs in terms of usability and managing its environmental impact

In addition to the specific Development Management and area based policies that will be in the new Local Plan, it is envisaged that a Design and Heritage Supplementary Planning Document will also be produced. This will provide more detailed policy guidance to support Local Plan policies and will act as a policy 'thread' between the more general policies in the Local Plan and the specific management proposals contained in individual conservation area appraisals and management plans.

As part of establishing the evidence base for the Local Plan, a Town Strategy has been developed for Sandbach along with other towns in Cheshire East. The strategy sets out a number of community priorities for the town and development options. The Town Council has not endorsed the specific development options in the strategy but it has endorsed the vision and objectives set out in the strategy. Key objectives include:

- Promotion of tourism and the visitor economy
- Enhance and promote the town centre and make it accessible to all
- An integrated transport system that provides access for all
- Promoting community facilities
- Preserve and enhance the historic and natural environment of the town

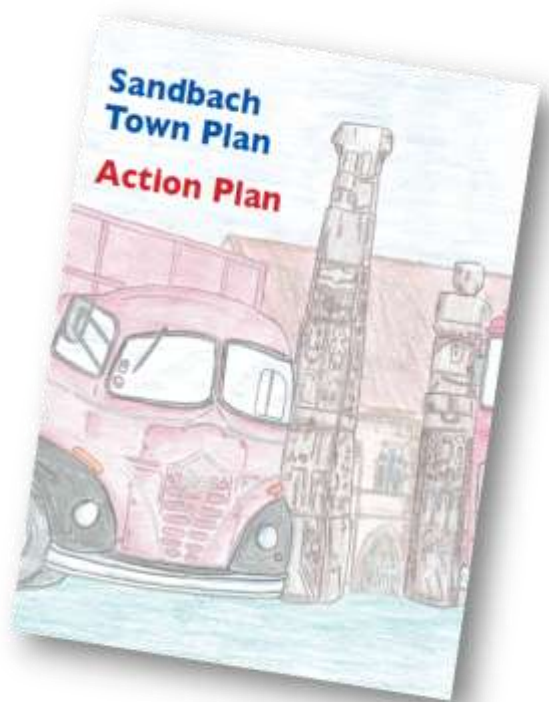
The Sandbach Town Plan

The community of Sandbach has set out a framework for the future management and improvement of the town, drawing on the input by residents, businesses and community interests. Conservation issues are highlighted primarily in actions 24-30 of the action plan. Relevant key actions highlighted are:

- Preservation and care of green spaces
- Improvement of the High Street, in particular the quality of shop frontages and signage
- Tackling grot spots around the town
- Better maintained pavements and encouraging cycling
- More control over late night drinking
- More variety of markets and events
- Protection of distinctive buildings and tighter planning controls in historic areas
- Tighter regulation on shop fronts and signage
- Heritage interpretation and publicity
- Support for improved ICT infrastructure
- Improve safety of areas including alleyways
- Improve pedestrian safety and traffic management



Proposed structure of the new Local Plan



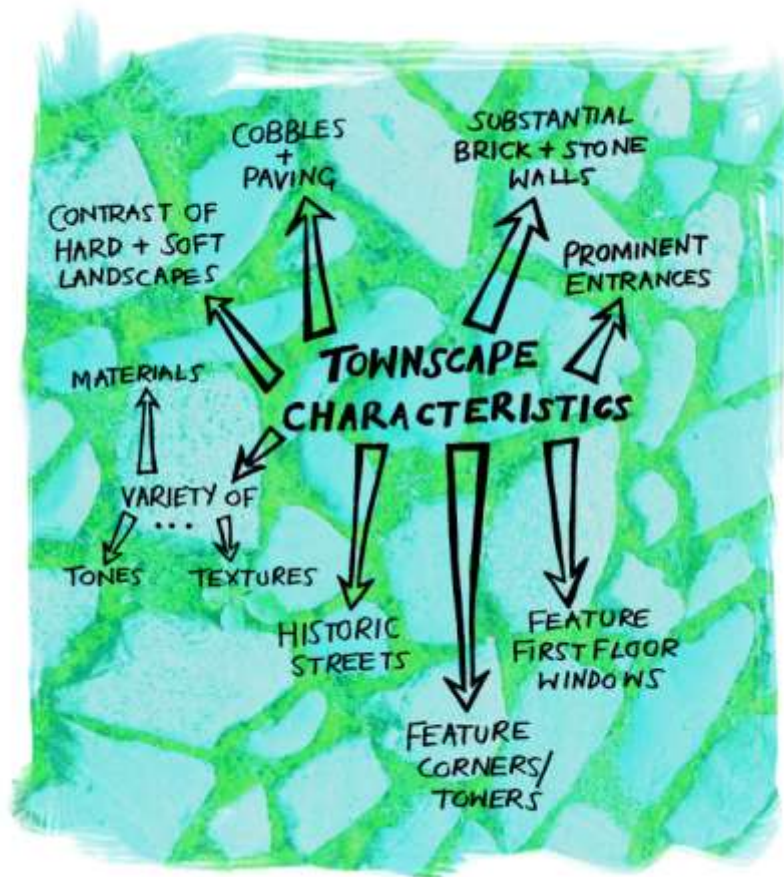
Sandbach Town Plan, prepared by the local community of Sandbach

3 Summary of special interest

Sandbach Conservation Area is a multi period conservation area that encompasses different eras of town development. These character areas exhibit specific and varied townscape characteristics and features of special interest that will be explained area by area later in this appraisal. The town centre retains its identity as a market town which has a medieval heart focused upon the historic market square and church. This core area is surrounded by attractively grouped buildings and structures dating from the 16th to the 19th Century. Contrasting, distinct character areas to the north further enrich the significance of the Conservation Area, reflecting the Victorian and early Edwardian expansion of the town, initially in a linear fashion along key routes and then infilled by later Victorian/Edwardian growth.

Key elements of significance are:

- Key landmark buildings of different periods, many of which are listed
- St Mary's Church and its grounds act as both a key landmark but also a green heart for the town, which is visible in several key vantage points, particularly from the south, east and west
- Other key historic buildings define focal points in key views, including the Town Hall, the Literary Institute, Old Hall, The Black Bear and the Swan and Chequers
- The historic medieval and post medieval street pattern is largely intact and is particularly evident in Well Bank, Crown Bank, Hawke Street, Church Street, Front Street, Back Street, Hope Street and part of High Street. The latter having been re-developed by Georgian and Victorian buildings
- A stronger sense of enclosure and urban character in the northern area with buildings defining edges of the public realm and largely continuous frontages. The townscape in the south is of a more organic, informal character, with enclosure created by boundaries as well as buildings and with areas of private frontage
- Pedestrian lanes and streets radiating from the market square are a remnant of the historic medieval townscape in the southern part of the conservation area
- There is townscape contrast between the greener character of the southern part of the conservation area and the harder, more urban townscape to the north. The churchyard is the key area of green space and mature landscape in the conservation area
- The cobbled market square defines the primary space with its historic Anglo Saxon crosses and enclosure by a number of characterful buildings
- The later townscape phases in the Hightown area and Green Steet/Welles Street have a more formal, planned character reflecting their development in the Victorian period
- Several monuments exist within the conservation area creating focal points within the townscape (all are protected)
- A rich variety of architectural detail including a number of timber framed buildings, Georgian and ornate neo-gothic Victorian architecture and some reasonable early 20th century early modernist architecture. The richness of features above eye level extends from high status landmark buildings to lower status, everyday buildings
- Areas of historic cobbled streets and pavements predominantly within the medieval core area, with sporadic remnants of Victorian surfacing comprising stone sets and gulleys and blue brick paving
- A mix of uses predominantly focused on retail with a high percentage of local independent retailers. The town centre is primarily active during the daytime rather than the evening
- Historical events and commemorations associated with the town, not least the skirmish at Scotch Common, the weekly market and two fairs and more modern events such as the annual transport festival



Mind maps summarising elements of the significance of the conservation area



*Congleton Road elevation of the
Swan and Chequers*

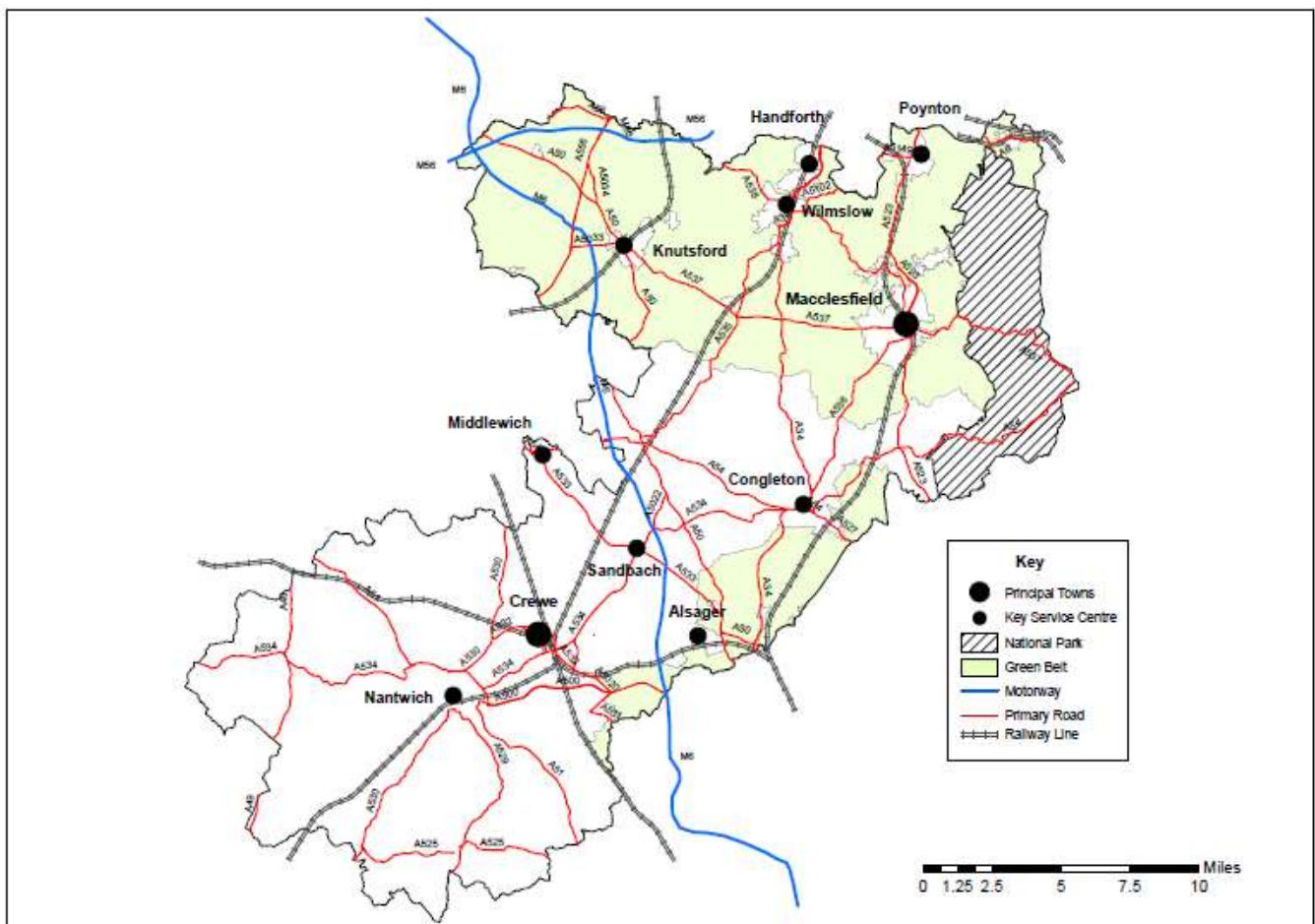
4 Assessment of special Interest

4.1 Location and wider setting

Sandbach's location and context

Cheshire occupies the low-lying plain between the Pennines and the North Welsh uplands. Historically it has been the main corridor of communication for journeys between the south and the North West of England and between England and the North Welsh Coast and ports for Ireland. Sandbach lies in the southern part of the county.

Sandbach is a modestly sized town with circa 17,000 residents and is located centrally but slightly to the south of the borough. It lies a mile to the west of junction 17 of the M6 and also has good accessible links to other towns in the borough, namely, Congleton, Alsager, Middlewich and Crewe. In the 1990s, the town was bypassed by the construction of Old Mill Road, which impacted significantly upon the townscape of the south western corner of the town centre but which took much of the through traffic out of the conservation area.

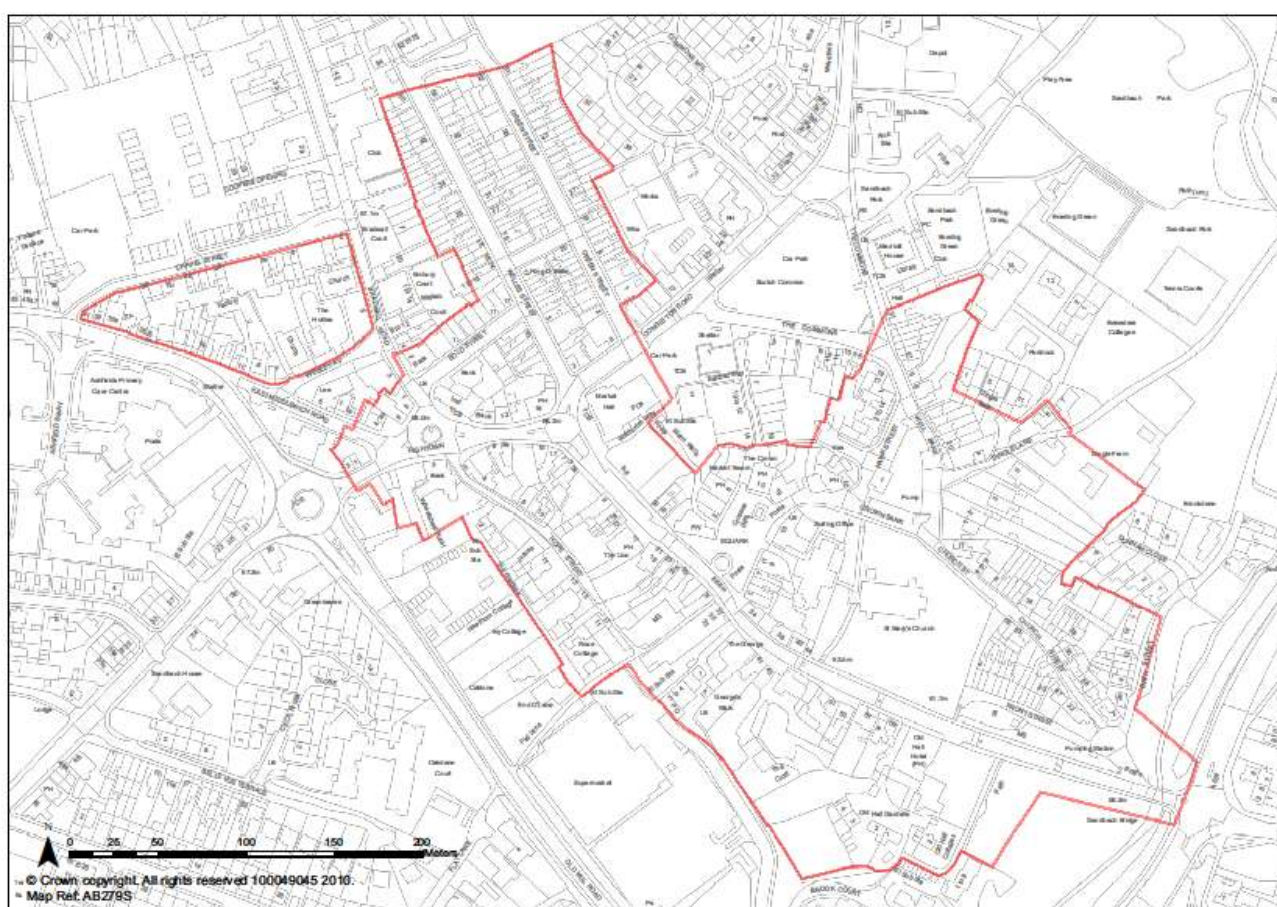


Map 2 Sandbach's location and context in relation to Cheshire East as a whole

The Town Centre Conservation Area

The Sandbach Town Centre Conservation Area is approximately 11.4 hectares in area and relatively compact based around the commercial and historic town centre. The town expanded in a ribbon pattern outwards along the principal roads to Middlewich and Crewe, parts of which presently lie within the current conservation area. In the late Victorian period, further expansion occurred to the north east, creating the terraced suburb of Green and Welles Street.

First designated in 1970, the conservation area included the area around St Mary's Church and Market Square. It was extended in 1976 to include Hightown and then again in 1995 to include Welles Street, Green Street, Bold Street, Wesley Avenue and Chapel Street. When these additional areas were designated, no formal assessment and/or analysis appears to have been undertaken as to the significance of the additions; they were just felt worthy of inclusion. It also split conservation area into the main area and a smaller section, with the area in-between on Wesley Avenue and part of Old Middlewich Road being excluded.



Map 3 the current boundary of the conservation area

Geology

Sandbach is located on the Cheshire Plain, an area extending from the Peak Fringe to the Dee estuary and contained by the mid Cheshire ridge in the west. Its landscape is characterised by gently undulating, often flat countryside. During the last ice age, retreating glaciers deposited a thick glacial till across the Cheshire Plain, overlaying deposits of heavy clays, sand and gravel. Post glacial forestation led to large areas of woodland across the plain, but subsequently, after many hundreds of years of human occupation and the extensive clearing of woodland, grassland and pasture began to dominate the landscape. This provided grazing land and ultimately led to widespread dairy farming in the area.

Significant tree coverage in medieval times provided a ready and plentiful source of timber for building. This heavily influenced the early local vernacular of timber framed buildings. A number remain, principally within the southern part of the Conservation Area with several fine examples, not least the Jacobean Old Hall, on High Street.

The presence of clay soils also probably led to the production of local brick and roof tiles, influencing the shift from timber framed to masonry buildings in the 18th century. The change from vernacular to more polite building design is evident in the Georgian buildings located in the Conservation Area. Proximity to the brick manufacturers in the potteries and the capacity to transport materials from further afield accelerated the use of mass manufactured bricks and roof tiles through the Victorian and Edwardian period, eventually leading to it becoming the predominant material in the conservation area.

The cobbled surface of the square and some historic streets reflects the local availability of this material. It is reputed that cobbles were 'harvested' from the fields and laid by the women folk of the town. In reality much of the cobbled surfacing has been re-laid in more modern times, including the square, which was substantially re-laid in Victorian times, and again in 2009.



Cobbles are a key characteristic of Sandbach

Topography

The wider topography around the town is generally quite uneventful. However, that of the town centre is a little more characterful. Sandbach straddles the valley of The Brook (The Bec), a tributary of the River Wheelock, essentially coalescing with the former village of Sandbach Heath to the south. Historically the settlements were separated by the valley, watercourse and latterly man made water bodies associated with the now demolished Brook Mill silk factory.

The landscape within the valley has been subject to ongoing change over the last 200 or more years as a result of the industrialisation and urbanisation of the town and more recently, highway improvements to create Old Mill Road. Consequently, the modern day landform is rather artificial and much altered, making it difficult to envisage how it would have been historically.

Church Street, leading up to Hawke Street, conveys the relatively steep gradient that would have characterised the southern High Street prior to it being bridged in the latter part of the 18th century. When Town Bridge was constructed, the levels of the southern part of High Street were increased considerably creating a shallower gradient into the Conservation Area from the bridge to the church, which then steepens for a short distance before it levels out towards the cobbled market square.

This sets the southern part of High Street above the area of Front Street and Church Street creating attractive views and prominence for the properties on Front Street, with the Church as a backdrop. This vista is often exploited by photographers wishing to capture the historic essence of the town.

The 'remodelling' of the southern part of the conservation area in the 18th and 19th centuries also incorporated extension of the churchyard and the construction of the substantial Sandstone wall that contains it (including the distinctive stone steps leading from Front Street to High Street). The prominence of the church has increased as a consequence of these works, resulting in an artificially enhanced setting and wide ranging views



Artificially elevated church site and Sandstone wall

from the churchyard over the southern part of the conservation area. The wall is a strident but also attractive feature in the public realm of Front Street and Church Street, in essence 'elevating' the church above the secular townscape surrounding it.

Land form is also an important characteristic in the other areas of the southern part of the conservation area, leading down from Scotch Common into Well Bank and from the cobbles into Crown Bank and Church Street. This helps to reinforce its intimate and informal character and to create informal viewpoints within the area.

From the east on Dingle Lane, the land falls south westward into the Conservation Area to Well Bank, also creating attractive views into the Conservation Area. This green lane creates an informal vantage point where the conservation area can be experienced in a different way. This is the last remaining green lane into the area.

In contrast, the area of the town centre north and west of the square is relatively flat with a much shallower gradient resulting in a less dramatic townscape where the grouping of buildings, punctuated by landmarks and their relationship to space is the most distinctive characteristic, rather than the underlying landform and its influence on townscape. The quite distinct contrast between the steeper topography of the southern conservation area and the flatter northern area also reinforces the sense of arrival upon reaching the heart of the conservation area.

Landscape and setting

The Parish Church stands dominantly on its elevated spur of land, surrounded by mature trees within the church yard. This sense of greenness reinforces its dominance as a landmark and the quality of the southern approach on High Street. In Church Street, the effect is less noticeable until much closer to the church, because of the narrowness of the street, its irregular alignment and the tightly arranged buildings, channelling and shortening the view.

Along High Street, west of Town Bridge, the green gateway character is reinforced by the densely wooded area to the south, up to Old Hall and the tree lined embankment between High Street and Front Street to the north. This connects the southern belt of landscape with the trees in the church yard.

Other pockets of landscape help to characterise the southern part of the conservation area. A small triangular greenspace situated between Well Bank and Crown Bank creates a focal point in short views, whilst the garden area to the recently refurbished Old Hall, also creates a pleasant green space in the High Street area, situated opposite and complimenting the greenness of the churchyard. Domestic gardens in Front Street, Church Street, High Street and Well Bank further add to the landscape quality and informality of this part of the conservation area.

Recently, further landscape has been introduced into the conservation area with trees planted as part of the refurbishment of the square in 2009. However, the constraints of the space and relationship to buildings have limited the number and the species so that it will have a relatively modest landscape impact in the longer term.

The swathe of mature trees within the Brook valley and alongside Dingle Lake creates a dense green edge, largely reducing the visibility of the town centre from the south. Whilst this is an attractive, soft foreground to the Conservation Area it does mean that the area is largely hidden, except in occasional glimpse views and in views at the junction of Old Mill Road and High Street. When trees are in full leaf, the town centre is largely invisible from the south east.

Mature landscape in High Street toward Town Bridge

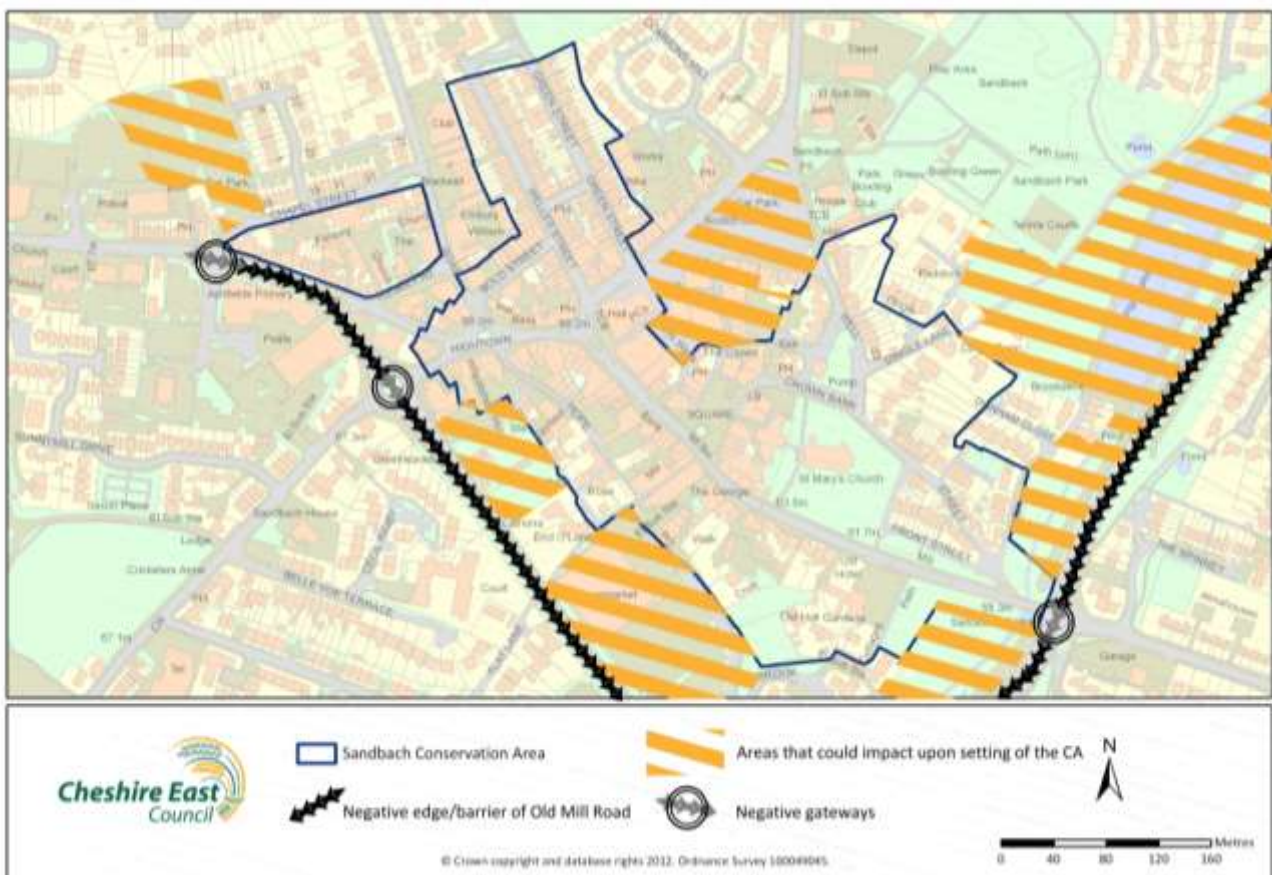


The southern belt of landscaping extends northward up Brookhouse Road, to the rear of properties off High Street. The landscaping encloses the rear of High Street and helps to contain views. To the north east, beyond Dingle Farm, greenness extends with a block of trees to the east of Dingle Lane, which merges with the landscape in the southern area of Sandbach Park.

In the area of Scotch Common and around the library, to the north of the conservation area, a number of mature trees help to define the gateway from Congleton Road. The trees surrounding Scotch Common help to soften it but they have a limited wider townscape impact due to their modest height and therefore lacking the presence of true street trees in creating greenness and structure within the townscape.

The northern part of the conservation area is almost entirely devoid of trees and planned landscape, green space is restricted to curtilages. The edge of the Ashfields medical centre has some trees and landscaping but they have very little impact in defining the entrance into the area from the west.

Old Mill Road, creates a very engineered environment immediately to the east, south and west of the town centre. Whilst it is outside the conservation area, it does have a bearing on its setting, as it forms a significant barrier between the town centre and surrounding townscape, creating quite a negative impression of place, particularly evident at the nodal points/junctions. This is especially apparent where it skirts around the south western edge of the town centre and is aligned by open car parks, inanimate building edges and areas of open land without function, creating a fractured townscape. This influences impressions of Sandbach's town centre and has some bearing on impressions of the conservation area. The junction with Crewe Road is particularly an issue because townscape with heritage value is presently separated from the town centre by the roundabout, and because of its immediacy to the conservation area. Consequently, whilst this is probably the least engineered of the main gateways, it is still poor for pedestrians, affecting perception of the conservation area. It also influences the quality of views into and out of the area.



Map 4 Setting and negative features

4.2 History and archaeology

Early history

There is limited evidence of prehistoric and Roman activity in the area and it is uncertain when occupation first started in Sandbach. The earliest reference to Sandbach appears in the Domesday Survey in 1086 when it was recorded as *Sanbec*. The name refers to a 'sandy valley-stream' presumably a reference to the local tributary stream of the River Wheelock.

The Domesday survey records a priest and a church at Sandbach, which implies a settlement of some size. Sandbach is known for its two 9th century stone crosses which now stand in the market place, and in the churchyard the remains of a further cross can be seen, together with two pre-Viking tombs slabs. The Domesday reference and the presence of these pre-Viking sculptures, suggests that there was a high status ecclesiastical centre at Sandbach, potentially even a Minster church, and this is most likely to have been located in St Mary's churchyard. The former sub-circular outline of the churchyard is still partially discernible on the Tithe map of 1840 and this shape is often associated with early medieval ecclesiastical foundations. The church and churchyard are located on a steeply elevated site, thus creating a prominent local landmark.



The iconography of the Sandbach crosses appears to be aimed at both monastic and secular Christian audiences, and it is for the latter that they were probably produced. The crosses and the other pre-Conquest sculptural fragments, strongly suggest that Sandbach was an important regional centre in the 9th century within the north-western part of the kingdom of Mercia, possibly associated with a school of sculpture, which was in contact with developments in continental art.

The fate of the minster is unknown but it is possible that along with a number of other ecclesiastical foundations, Sandbach may well have become a victim of the Viking raids, sometime during the late 9th century.

The minster church may have been responsible for a large area stretching as far as Middlewich and Davenham, but by the mid-13th century the parish had been reduced to just a core area around the church with two associated chapelries at Holmes Chapel and Goostrey. At this time, the lords of the manor had assumed the local name, with *Richard de Sandbache* the first individual recorded. Documentary records show that the manorial lands were clearly extensive and provided a large rental income.



The manor of Sandbach passed through numerous families and was eventually bought by Sir Randulph (Randle) Crewe, who became Lord of the Manor.

The medieval settlement at Sandbach probably clustered around the church and the market place. Although Sandbach's market charter was not granted until the 16th century, such charters were often a legitimisation of an earlier market, and this was probably true of Sandbach. The market place is adjacent to the High Street, the main east-west thoroughfare, yet none of the major roads of Sandbach runs directly into the market place. While the market place may have been a later addition to the town plan, its location next to the church equally suggests that it may have an early origin. This is a common occurrence in medieval settlements and

there are a number of examples of early medieval 'minster markets', where a market place is located by a gate of the minster enclosure.

Archaeological excavations undertaken in 1981 in the central market area of the town, although only small scale, clearly show that archaeological deposits dating from the medieval period do survive in the historic core of Sandbach. This evidence comprised domestic settlement, including a potential oven, enclosed within property boundaries.

The area of medieval settlement may have been formally laid out as the property boundaries running at right angles to the High Street frontage and backing onto Hope Street, appear to represent medieval tenements.

Post medieval

Sandbach did not have a borough charter and it did not receive its market charter until 1578/9 when Sir John Ratcliffe of Ordsall obtained a charter from Queen Elizabeth I, granting him the rights to hold a market and two fairs at Sandbach, but this may well have simply 'legalised' what was a much earlier informal event. The 'Market Hall' or 'Old Town Hall' was erected in the south of the market place. The space between the building's piers which faced into the market square was used for the incarceration of prisoners and for shops, whilst on the opposite side, facing onto the High Street were stalls used by butchers and other food sellers. The site of the old market hall was identified when works were undertaken to the square in 2009.

The town continued to develop in the Middle Ages and provided for the material as well as for the spiritual needs of the surrounding agricultural population. The original market was located on the cobbles and this area around the Market Square and to the east still has a pleasant country town environment with alleyways, black and white timbered buildings, old inns and shops.

Old Hall is the most outstanding example of a timber framed post medieval building in the town and is listed Grade I. It was built in 1656 by John Radclyffe, the son of Sir John Radclyffe, Lord of the Manor of Sandbach. It replaced a previous hall dating from the 13th century that was owned by the Sandbache family, destroyed by fire. There is also archaeological evidence of an earlier 12th century building on the site which apparently served as the seminary for priests attached to the local minster.

During the 17th century Sandbach was noted for the quality of its ales, which were popular in London, although production appears to have ceased by the late 19th century. The population of Sandbach in 1664 has been estimated from the hearth tax as numbering 664. Associated with this trade were the beer houses, public houses and inns of the town. The earliest surviving public houses are the Lower Chequer Inn which dates from the late 16th or early 17th centuries, the Black Bear Inn dated 1634, and the 17th century Fox Inn. In 1850 there were twelve establishments recorded as hotels, inns, taverns, or 'beer houses'.

The silk industry

A textile industry had been established in the Sandbach area by c.1809, when the Wheelock Mill was constructed. The Brook Silk Mill in the south-west area of the town, was built c.1850 by which time the silk industry employed upwards of 500 workers. Brook Mill had a significant influence on the town's development. The works comprised two large linear factory buildings with an associated large rectangular area of water called 'The Pool'. It is likely that 'The Pool' was originally a mill pond, supplying the large quantities of water used in the production of silk, but the boat house and tree lined walks shown on the OS First Edition suggest that this was also used as a leisure area.

Newfield Mill, dating from the mid 19th Century was located north of Scotch Common and may well have influenced the laying out of the Green Street/Welles Street area of the Conservation Area. The trade was still flourishing in 1882, and contributed to the prosperity of the town. The regional silk

industry may have begun to decline from the mid 19th century, and in towns such as Congleton the effects of this decline were offset by the establishment of a fustian-cutting industry. Fustian cutting was eventually introduced to the Commons Factory and the Town Mill in Sandbach. Other textiles were also produced, such as Worstead yarn and fabrics for country wear.

The mills were big employers in the town and approximately 500 women worked in the silk trade in 1861 plus children (half timers) and a few men.

The 18th and 19th centuries

Expansion of the town was further stimulated by the establishment of other local industries, such as shoe making, salt making, chemicals and engineering.

This urban growth resulted in modifications to the town plan, including the raising of the High Street to the level of the new bridge, an action which resulted in the original east-west route through the town (directly to the south of the church) becoming redundant, and the churchyard being enlarged. The population rose from just over 1,800 in 1801 to over 5,500 in 1901. The principal area of new development was in 'Hightown', located to the north-west of Sandbach's historic core. Hightown was an area of green field industrial and domestic development, including workers' terraced houses, typical of the Victorian period. Houses belonging to the employees of the shoe industry were built fronting onto Scotch Common, and also located in this area was the Newfield Silk Mill. The earliest reference to Scotch Common dates from 1583, and later it provided the location for Sandbach's two annual fairs. The common has a regular triangular shape formed by the converging Hightown and Well Bank roads, suggesting that its establishment was the result of planning rather than organic growth.

In 1889 the Old Town Hall was replaced by the present hall (located opposite Welles Street) at a cost of £5000. The spacious new building had the capacity to hold up to eight hundred people, and the old market hall was demolished in 1891, however the market place was still used as a venue for smaller subsidiary markets, Archaeological work in 2009 revealed the remains of the old brick built Town Hall and pits and post holes dating from the early 17th century.

The parish church of St. Mary's underwent periodic remodelling and rebuilding throughout the post medieval period. The building retains some mid 17th century architectural features, including a number of roof corbels, and masonry on its south side. Between 1847-9 the church was substantially rebuilt by the noted architect George Gilbert Scott. Scott was also the architect of the Church of St. John on Sandbach Heath, which was completed in 1861.



The non-conformist movement was well represented in the town and the surrounding area. The Wesleyans were established by 1744 and by 1785 the movement had twenty members, a figure which had risen to 100 in 1807. In 1872 a chapel was built on Middlewich road, although occasional services were held at the Commons Silk Factory. An Independent (Congregational) chapel was erected on Hope Street in 1836, with a Sunday School and burial ground established by 1860, and a new schoolroom added in 1893. In 1832 Primitive Methodists met in a small brick chapel on Union Street, as well as in a chapel at Ettiley Heath. A United Methodist Chapel was located on Bradwell Road.

The prominent non conformists were also the leading members of the Co-operative movement, which became quite a force in the town. The shops in Bold Street (with art deco influenced frontages) sold

a variety of goods, whilst the first floor was used as a reading room. The Co-op were responsible for Tuesday half day closing and annual holidays.

Sandbach is situated at the junction of a number of important routeways, a location which encouraged the establishment of a number of stagecoach services. In 1822 the London Service called at the George Hotel, whilst other services were run daily to Liverpool and Manchester. The date of the earliest Sandbach Bridge is unknown, but it may have been built c.1777 to replace an earlier ford. Industry in the town was further encouraged by the cutting of the Trent and Mersey Canal (c.1775), which passed through Elworth to the west and Wheelock to the south, and the construction of the Manchester to Crewe Railway (1840) to the west, which had a station at Elworth. This new transport system undoubtedly provided the commercial incentive for the expansion of the existing salt industry at Wheelock, and is likely to have had a positive effect upon the industries of Sandbach.

The 20th century

Sandbach continued to grow rapidly in the 20th century. Two major commercial automotive companies were based in the town, one site being located to the west of the Town Centre, which latterly became ERF and Fodens based in Elworth (off Moss Lane). Fodens became a world leading brand in lorry manufacture. These companies provided a significant employment base for the town. Jennings Coach Works was a large employer next to ERF, manufacturing cabs for lorries. The industry declined in the latter part of the 20th century and now very little remains of that industrial heritage, except the annual transport festival. One lasting townscape reference to the Foden name is Foden Terrace, off Middlewich Road, which presently lies outside the Conservation Area.

During the latter half of the 20th century larger scale developments within or on the edge of the town have been largely detrimental to its market town character. The modern shopping precinct of Penda Way/Sanbec Way and St. George's walk provide two of the key pedestrian gateways into the area but both feel tired, poor for pedestrians and are unsympathetic to the conservation area and its setting. Their architectural quality has detracted from the conservation area and they feel unwelcoming and hostile to pedestrians, particularly at night time. The servicing areas in Warmwalls and the area between Waitrose and Iceland are also a very unwelcoming place for pedestrians, with historic pedestrian routes running through them.

In High Street more recent buildings have had a detrimental impact upon the character of the conservation area, in particular Iceland, Boots and the units in front of Town Mill. The Post Office in Market Place is also a negative building in this attractive townscape.

Modern development at Sandbach has significantly increased the extent of the town, and has largely linked the settlements of Sandbach, Elworth and Wheelock to the town centre. At Sandbach and Wheelock development has generally been domestic, including large housing estates and their associated infrastructure: schools, leisure centres, parks, cemeteries etc. Elworth has undergone both domestic and industrial expansion, particularly to the west but some of those industrial sites are being regenerated for housing.

This overview of the historical development of the town explains how the town has continuously evolved and grown but that the pace of change in the 20th century accelerated quite dramatically. This pressure for change will continue as significant housing growth and further employment is anticipated and there are areas in the town centre that need to be regenerated. Consequently, in order to maintain a sense of place for the town, it will be important to protect its character, not least the character and quality of the town centre and in particular the conservation area.

Key historical events

The key visible archaeological features within the town centre are the Sandbach Saxon Crosses, designated as a scheduled monument (National Heritage List for England no.1011144). They are highly celebrated, and are also grade I listed structures, dating from the early to mid 9th Century. The

written history of the crosses is extensive and information is available from many published documentary sources. The crosses due to their age are vulnerable and are monitored by English Heritage.

Historically, the theory behind the origin and presence of the crosses was that they commemorated the conversion to Christianity of Paeda, the son of the Saxon King of Mercia, King Penda. Peada was baptised in Northumbria before he married the Christian Princess Alchflæda and returned to Mercia (Sanbec) with the blessing of his father King Penda. The four priests accompanying his court then settled there to convert the locals to Christianity, establishing the Saxon Minster Church and a seminary for the four priests on the site of Old Hall. The community of priests were responsible not only for the conversion of the district but also subsequently for ministering to its religious needs.

However, research carried out by Jane Hawkes in 2002 and other archaeological work has not provided evidence of Old Hall being the site of a Seminary, and it is believed that it was the secular manorial centre. But, it is considered that the presence of the crosses and other monuments of the period suggest that the settlement was the site of an ecclesiastical centre or Saxon Minster, served by a community of priests.

The crosses were badly damaged either after the Reformation or during the Civil War by religious extremists. Except for the platform, base stones and a large part of one shaft, the stones were dispersed. They were recovered by Cheshire historian George Ormerod and in 1816 the townsfolk were persuaded to restore the Crosses as far as possible to their original state.

The English Civil War largely bypassed Sandbach, but a brief event has influenced the history and folk lore of the town. The Common which lies to the north of the Conservation Area (now the Scotch Common car park), was the site of a skirmish between Scottish Royalist Troops and the local population. The townspeople of Sandbach are said to have attacked the defeated Royalist army which was travelling through the town en route to Scotland at the time of the town fair. Since then it has been known as Scotch Common. This event is commemorated by a board located in the car park and there has been re-enactment in the town, involving the Sealed Knot. Although this is a historically significant site, it is not presently included in the conservation area boundary. The Commons was sold in 1917 and given to the people of Sandbach by Lord Crewe.



The plaque commemorating the Scotch Common Skirmish

Archaeological evidence

There is little evidence of significant prehistoric or Roman activity at present. However, Roman archaeology has been found in the wider area associated with important settlements to the north and west, namely Northwich, Nantwich and Middlewich. These towns were at the centre of salt production in the area and it is conceivable that more modest Roman settlement also occurred in the Sandbach area alongside transport routes to these settlements, particularly Middlewich.

The presence of the Anglo Saxon Crosses and the fragments suggests a significant religious centre in the early 9th century and that the settlement flourished in the pre-Viking period. However, as outlined above, there is a certain amount of conjecture about the history and purpose of the crosses themselves.

During the Medieval period interest remained focussed on the market Square, parish church and surrounding area, including the Old Hall. Early post-medieval occupation is evidenced by standing archaeology in the remaining early timber framed buildings dating from the 17th century. The property boundaries in the High Street area north of the square and in Church Street indicate medieval or early

post medieval expansion of the core of the town along the main street running through it. Indeed, the settlement expanded quite substantially compared to its pre-conquest origins.

Excavation in the 1980s suggested archaeological remains are resnet in the core area of the town centre but that they are ephemeral and liable to disturbance. The Local Plan therefore identifies 2 specific areas within the defined Area of Archaeological Potential, namely early medieval and medieval zones. These are indicated on the plan opposite.

Further archaeological work was undertaken in 2009 during the re-laying of the cobbles in the market square when the footprint of the original town hall was revealed situated on the frontage of the square. In 2011 a watching brief was carried out during renovations at Old Hall, but revealed little additional evidence

The Brook Silk Mill site and other industrial sites provide continuing post medieval archaeological interest within or close to the conservation area.



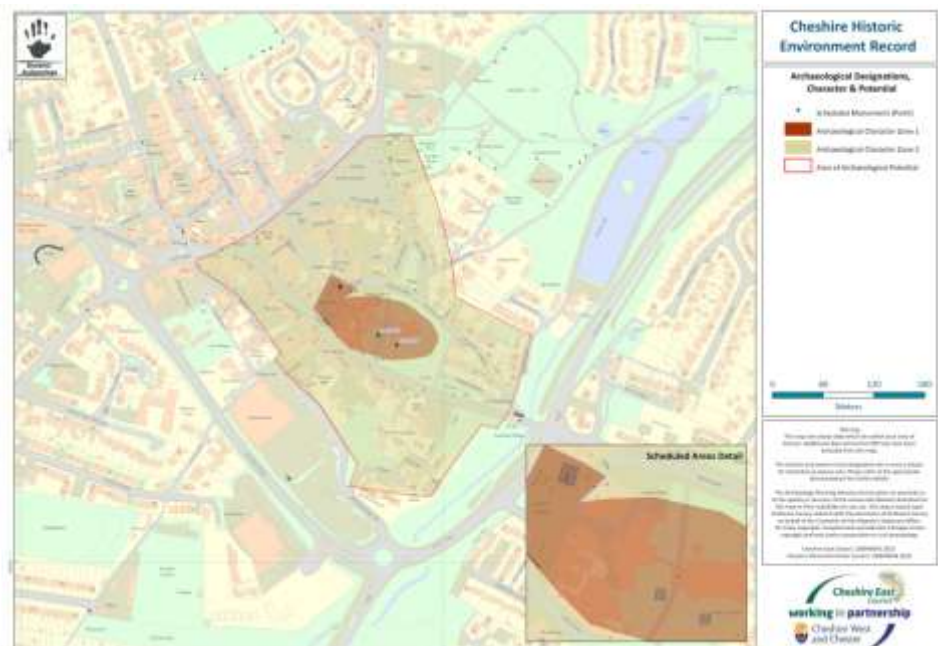
The Saxon crosses on the Cobbles



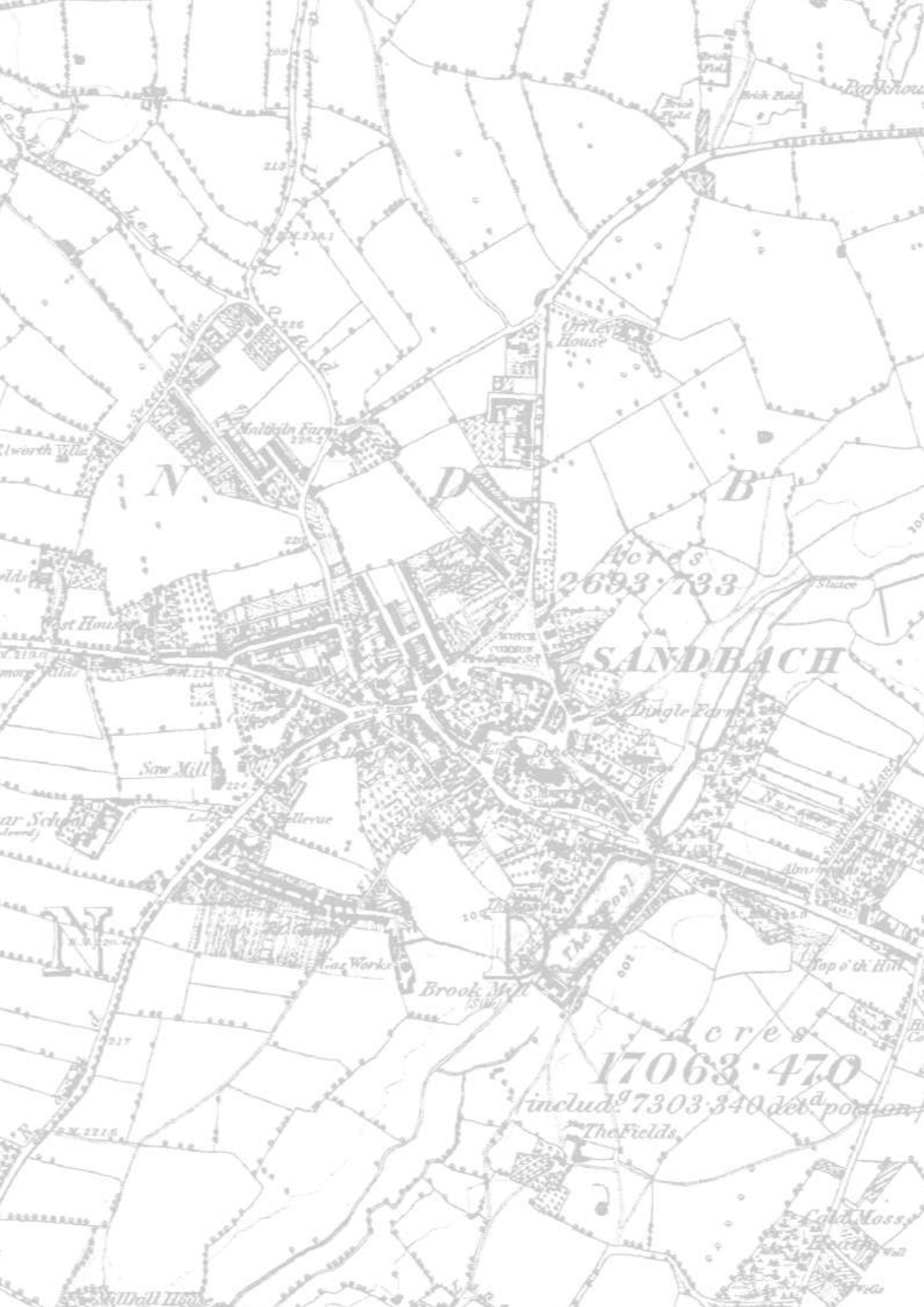
Tomb and cross fragments reflect the importance of Sandbach in Saxon times



Late-medieval pit and foundations of the demolished town hall – Market Square archaeological works 2009



Map 5: Archaeological potential and zones



N

D

B

Acres
2693.733

SANDBACH

Acres
17063.470

includes 7303.340 det^a portion
The Fields

Maiden Farm
224.2

Orley House

Saw Mill

Brook Mill
(S.M.)

Dingle Farm

Top o' th' Hill

Cold Moss

Mill Hill House

(Worth Villa)

Old

West House

ar School
(land)

Gas Works

Abney

well

vells

4.3 spatial analysis

Morphology of the conservation area

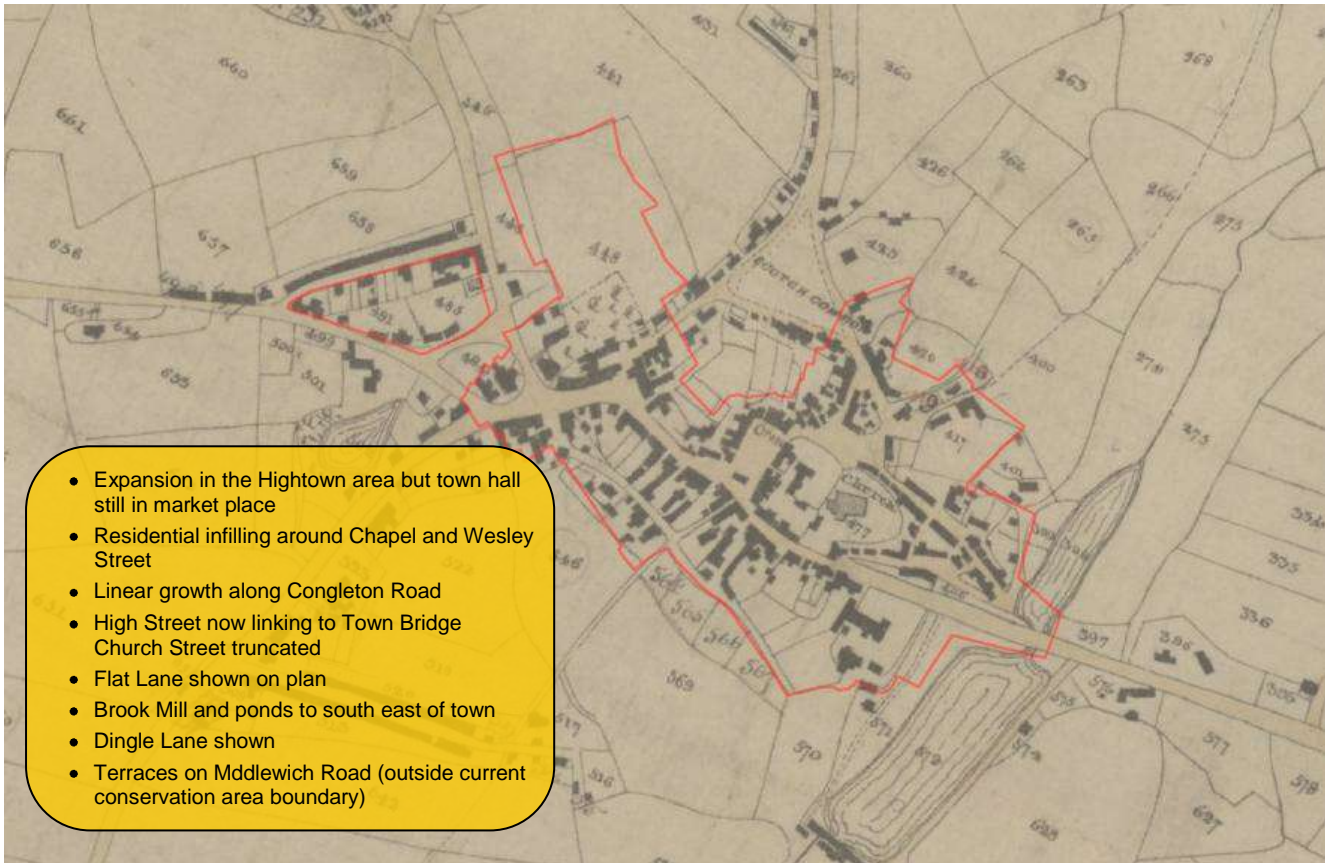
The morphology of the area is its arrangement of street and blocks, plot subdivision and positioning of buildings and how this has changed over time. Where the plot subdivision is small and frequent, the town is considered to have a 'fine grain', where plots are larger, with fewer, larger buildings then the grain is considered to be 'coarse grain'. A fine grain has been retained across much of the town centre, as demonstrated by the figure ground drawings below. These compare the urban form from the mid 19th century with that of the present day



The earliest detailed map for Sandbach is the Tithe map of 1841, which clearly shows the layout and grain of the town. Within the conservation area this has not changed significantly to the present day. The road network remains the same, with the exception of the bypass built in 1986, which cuts along the rear of the Gardens and links up with Middlewich Road, near Hightown. The later ordnance survey (1st Edition OS map surveyed in 1874 and published in 1884) shows the expansion of the town to create the Bold Street, Welles and Green Street terraces that took place later in the 19th century.

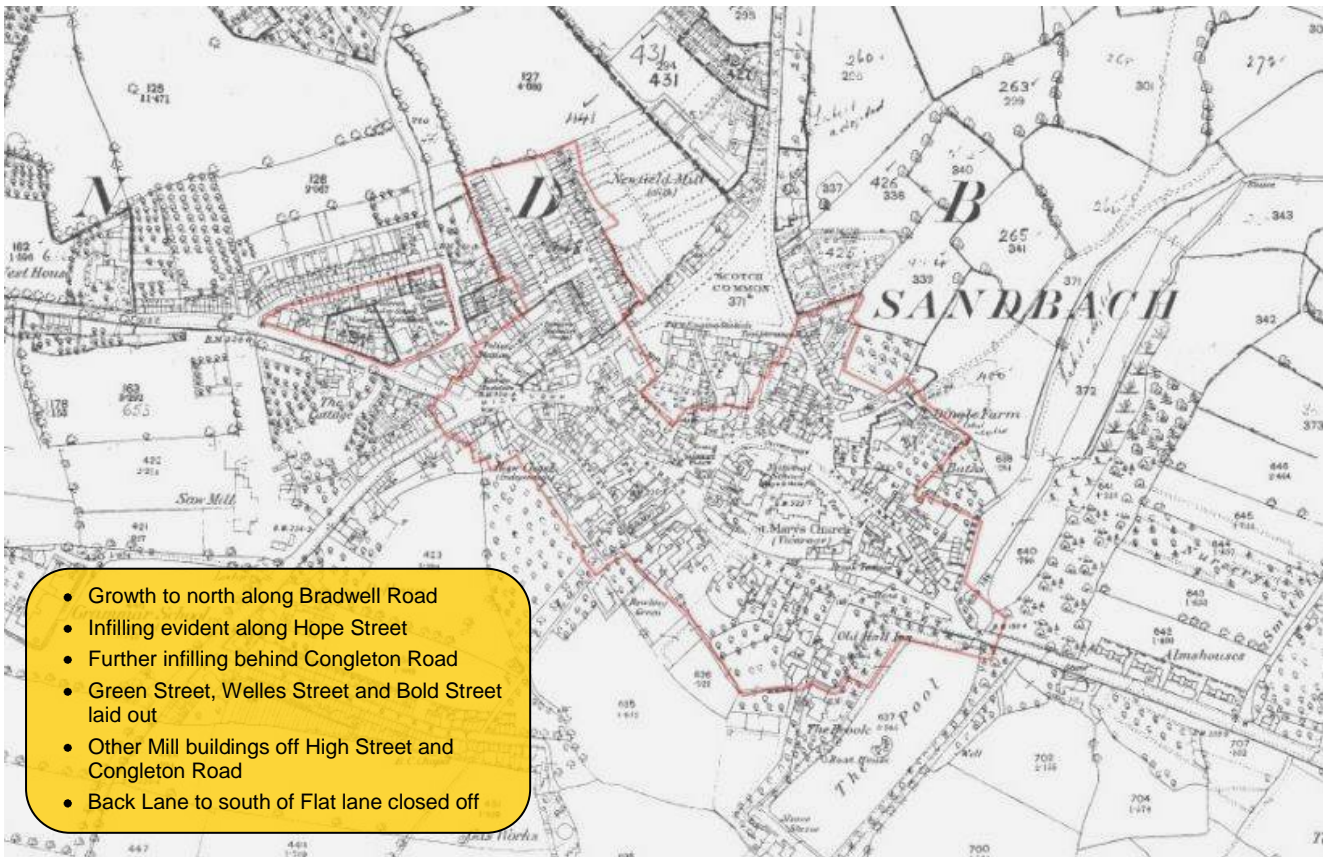
A map regression exercise over the following couple of pages further reviews the morphology of the town, highlighting changes that have occurred but also the elements of consistency that remain to the present day and which form part of the townscape character of the conservation area.

By analysing the sequence of maps it is also possible to identify 'hidden' history and patterns of buildings and uses that existed but which have been overlaid, leaving remnants of historical significance (including surviving buildings or parts of buildings in different uses, or in different townscape contexts).



- Expansion in the Hightown area but town hall still in market place
- Residential infilling around Chapel and Wesley Street
- Linear growth along Congleton Road
- High Street now linking to Town Bridge Church Street truncated
- Flat Lane shown on plan
- Brook Mill and ponds to south east of town
- Dingle Lane shown
- Terraces on Mddlewich Road (outside current conservation area boundary)

Tithe Map 1840

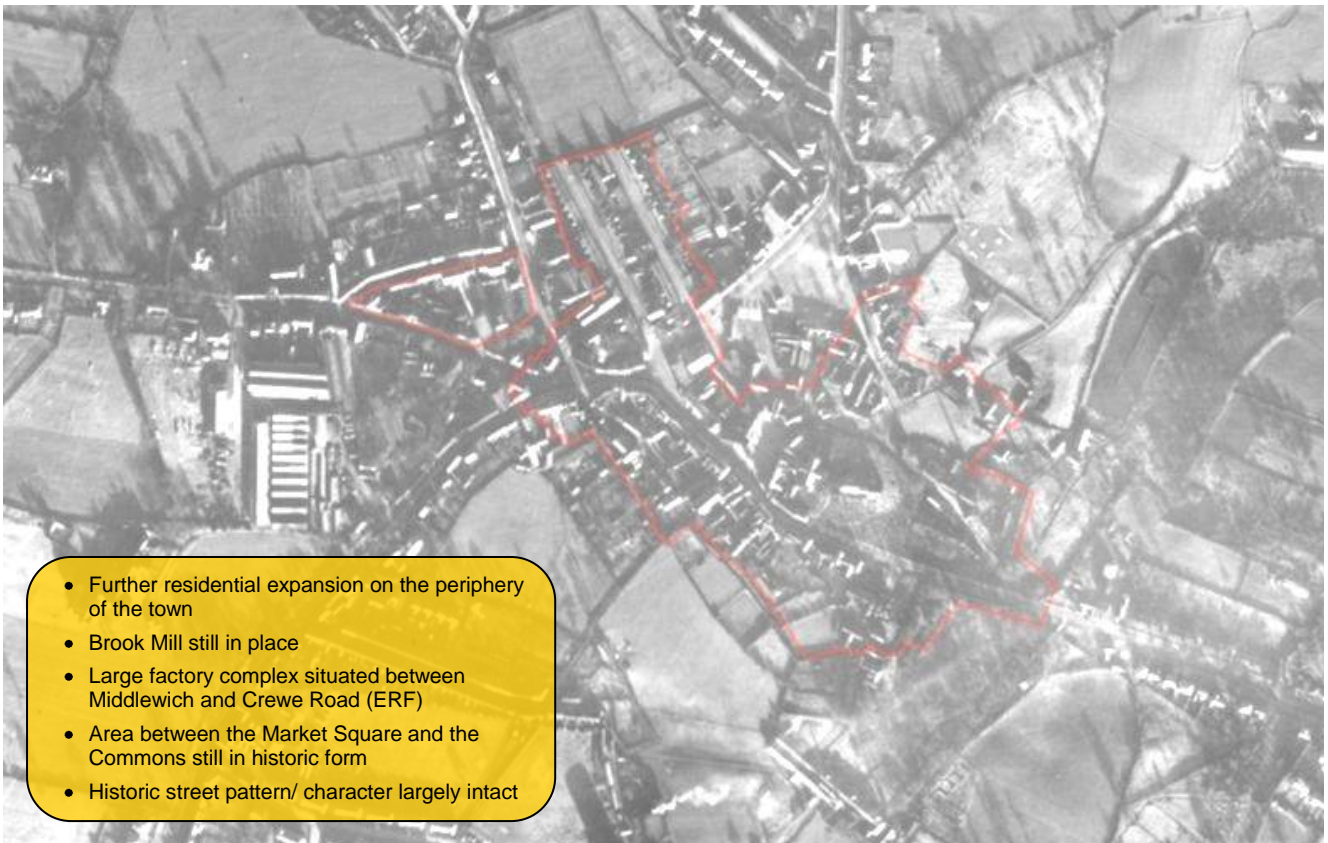


- Growth to north along Bradwell Road
- Infilling evident along Hope Street
- Further infilling behind Congleton Road
- Green Street, Welles Street and Bold Street laid out
- Other Mill buildings off High Street and Congleton Road
- Back Lane to south of Flat lane closed off

OS 1st Edition 1875



OS 3rd edition 1910



Aerial photograph 1947



Aerial photograph present day

Character and inter-relationship of spaces

There is one key civic space in the conservation area, the market place, known locally as ‘the Cobbles’ and located at the centre of what was the medieval township. During the latter part of the medieval period Sandbach began to develop a linear character with expansion along its main street which developed into the High Street, initially what is now Church Street, through to Middlewich Road, with secondary lanes intersecting with this primary route. Subsequently, with the Victorianisation of the High Street/High Town area, other secondary spaces have developed at these nodal points with the High Street (such as the space outside the Literary Institute in Hightown).

The potential of these incidental spaces along High Street is undermined, and, to an extent, obscured by the traffic dominance in the northern part of the town. The cobbles on the other hand have benefited from enhancement to sensitively improve the space, including limitation upon vehicular access. As a consequence, there is a strong contrast between the spatial quality of this and other hard spaces in the conservation area. These other spaces offer the potential to create a more extensive, better quality public realm in the future, if the traffic management issues can be addressed



The Cobbles – recently refurbished and traffic managed, creating a people focused public realm

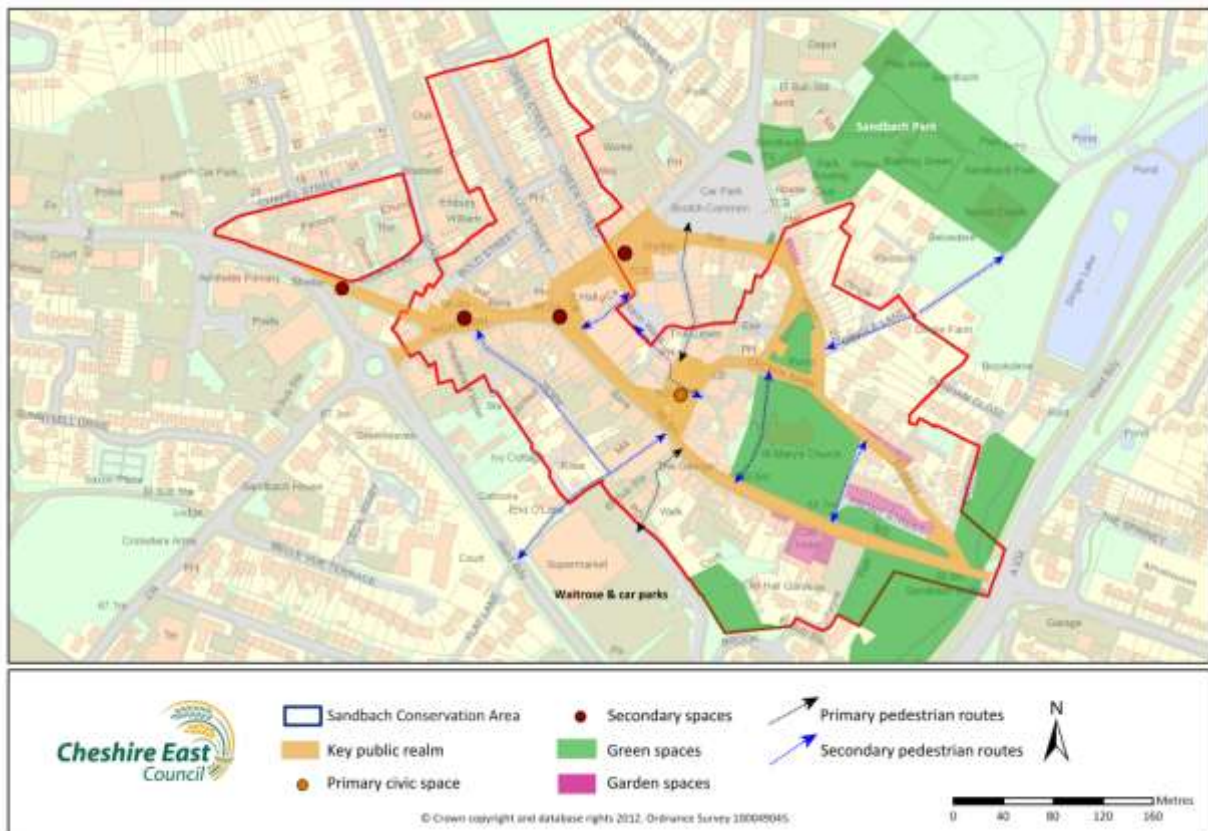
A further key space outside of the conservation area, but of historic importance to the town and which influences the setting of the conservation area, is Scotch Common. Its spatial quality is badly affected by its use as a car park but it is also invaluable in providing convenient parking for the town centre. It is also the main location for events like the fair and transport festival, as well as the extremely popular Thursday market. Along with the Penda Way shopping area, it also creates an uninviting route and a barrier from the heart of the conservation area to Sandbach Park, the key amenity space for the town situated just 2-300 metres from the Cobbles.

As previously discussed, the green spaces in the southern part of the conservation are a mix of public and private spaces of different sizes and types, ranging from the mature landscape setting of the church and woodland south east of Old Hall to the contribution made by individual gardens, in Front Street and High Street.

The contrast between hard and soft space within the conservation area helps to reinforce its character areas. The public realm and landscape qualities of specific areas are discussed in more detail later in this appraisal.

Spaces are generally interconnected by streets with sequential views, particularly in High Street and High Town. This helps to create a highly legible townscape. Public realm enhancement in this area would extend the usability and quality of the public realm, capitalising on the positive arrangement of buildings and space in this part of the town centre. A public realm strategy would help rationalise the approach and set in place principles for its design and future management.

Parts of the area retain an organic character, particularly the area to the south east of the Cobbles. The form and pattern of the area is heavily influenced by the arrangement of streets and pedestrian route ways. The width of the roads varies through the Conservation Area. As would be expected, streets are narrower and more organic in the eastern area and more formalised in areas of Victorian re-modelling and expansion in the western area. A grid street pattern exists in Welles and Green Streets.



Map 6: Spaces, routes and public realm



View from Crown Bank into the Cobbles

Key views and vistas

As befits such an interesting and characterful area, there are a variety of positive views into and within the conservation area.

In the eastern part of the conservation area the views are influenced more by topography. The 'artificial' elevation of the eastern part of High Street and the church yard have created manufactured views, whilst the organic street pattern in Church Street, Well Bank and Crown Bank create serial shortened views.

The focus of long views into the southern half of the conservation area is the church, the primary built landmark. However, its visual prominence is reduced by the heavy landscape that exists to the east alongside the Brook and Dingle Lake and indeed within the church yard itself. The combined vista of the church and its landscaped setting, establishes an interesting backdrop in views from Dingle Lane to the north, adding to the quiet, rural ambience of this route into the conservation area



Front Street cottages viewed from High Street



View of Church from Dingle Lane



View from St Mary's churchyard

Elevated views from High Street toward the attractive cottages in Front Street, with the church in the background, offer another characterful perspective of the oldest part of the town, whilst the view from the bottom end of Church Street up toward the church provides an intimate, channelled view up this meandering street. A series of characterful short views exist in Crown Bank and Well Street with views of buildings and trees. Within this area there is also an attractive view from Crown Bank into the Cobbles with the crosses as the focal point.



Part of panoramic view from the Cobbles



View from Well Bank toward Church

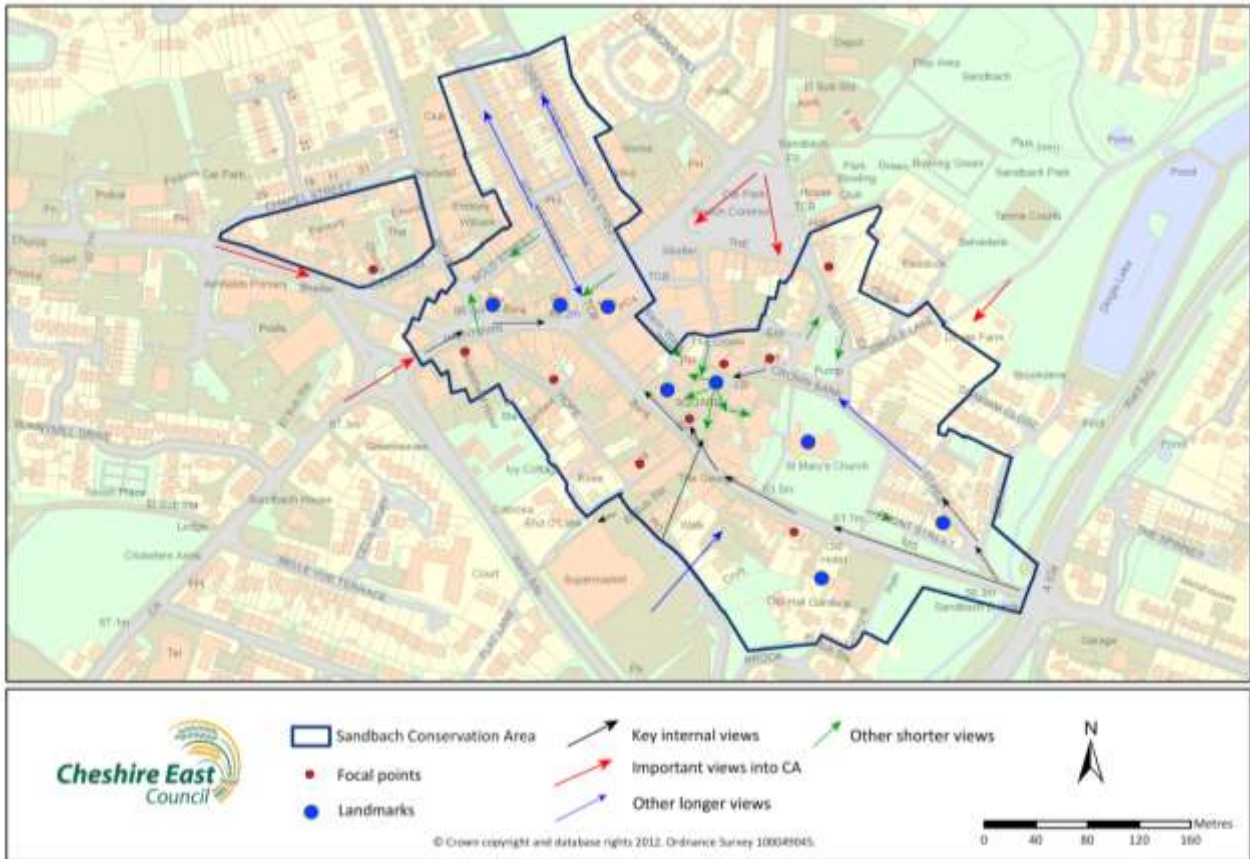


View to Crown Bank from Church Street

Within the square there are panoramic views of the characterful buildings surrounding the square and a positive view into Crown Bank.

From the south on High Street, there are long views, leading the eye up toward the heart of the town, with sideway views along the route of Old Hall and the Church. As the road narrows and bears right, there is a view of the George and then a sense of arrival as the Cobbles come into view, announced by the Black Bear at the threshold of the space.

Around the square, from the lanes and pedestrian routes, there are interesting short views into the space and of surrounding buildings. The view from Warm Walls toward the church is particularly attractive, with Godfrey William and Son delicatessen, the church hall and the church in the background. In the western area there are long views given the linearity of streets and the flatter topography. The main landmark in this area is the town hall at the junction of High Street/Congleton Road, visible from various vantage points including a long view from Middlewich Road, from High Town and from Green Street. The tower is also visible from Congleton Road and Scotch Common, as is the church tower.

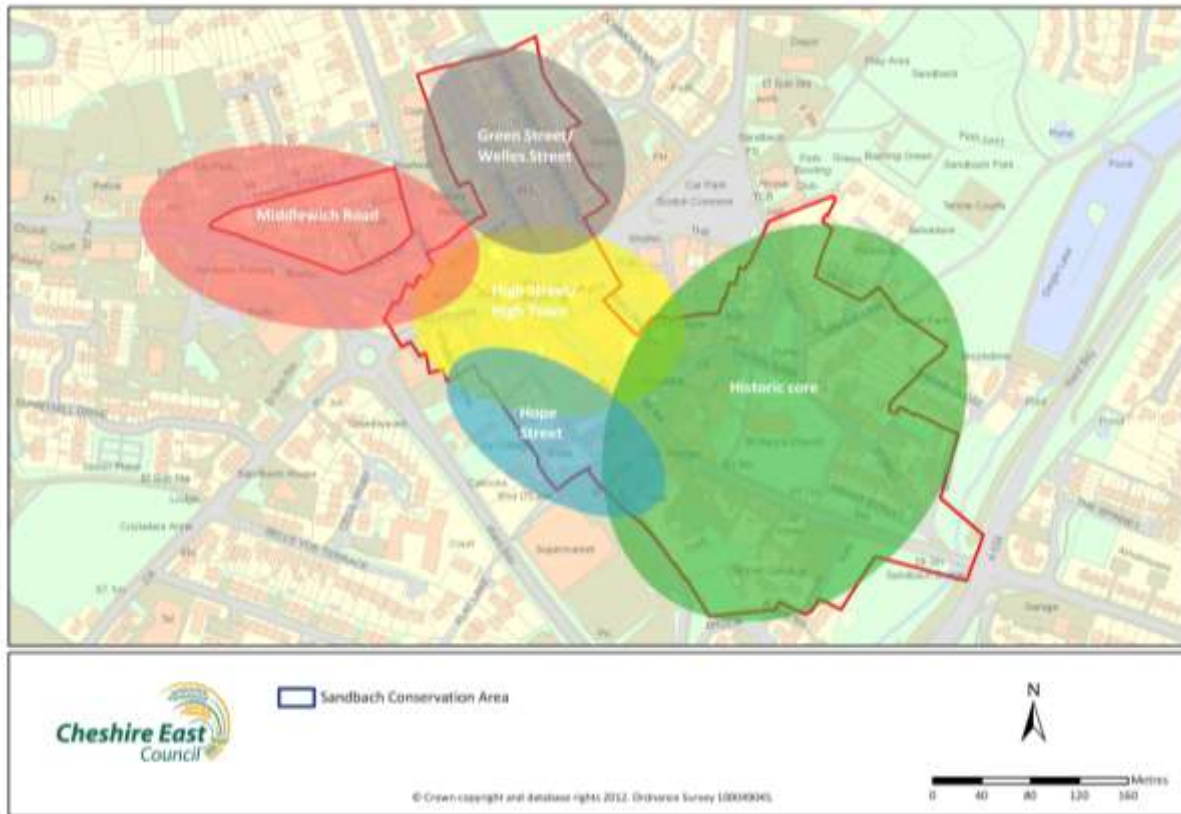


Map 7: Landmarks, focal points and key views



4.4 Character analysis

The conservation area covers a relatively large area, and as previously discussed, exhibits a degree of variety within distinct areas. Consequently, in order to present the character assessment, the appraisal breaks the area down into these individual 'character areas'. It should be noted that areas are not defined by specific edges and there is some blurring between them. The plan below indicates the different character areas identified. Key issues are summarised at the end of this section.



Map 8: Character areas

Historic Core

Occupying the eastern part of the town centre, this area is the oldest and most historic part of the conservation area and is focused on the original area designated in 1970. Key elements within the area are the Parish Church of St Mary and the market square. The area's principal characteristics and significance is summarised below:

Prevailing or former uses and their influence on buildings

This area contains the majority of the medieval core of the town. It contains a mixture of commercial and residential buildings. In general terms the commercial uses are focused in the western part of the area around the Cobbles and in Crown Bank and on High Street. These uses include shops, offices, the auction centre (hidden away behind the Cobbles) and restaurants and pubs, mainly focused around the square. Old Hall has recently been refurbished into a successful pub/restaurant, whilst at present the George is vacant. The Black Bear, on the cobbles is a highly visible, characterful public house, at the threshold to the town square.

Town Mill, situated in a yard between High Street and Hope Street is a former Silk Mill now in use as an antiques centre with the ground floor in use as a restaurant.

Historically, in medieval times the main street ran down Church Street, where early shops lined this narrow street. This historic function changed when High Street was remodelled and it became the shopping street, with the front Street properties becoming residential in use. Evidence of this historic use has been overwritten by subsequent refurbishment and replacement buildings.

Qualities of buildings

Within this part of the Conservation Area there is the greatest concentration of listed buildings/structures. There are 2 grade II* (St Mary's Church and the Black Bear) and 2 grade I (Old Hall and the Saxon crosses) listed buildings in this area. The Saxon crosses are also a scheduled monument. The area is very rich in individual heritage assets.

This area is also characterised by the concentration of surviving timber framed buildings:

- Old Hall
- Dingle Farmhouse
- The Black Bear
- 10 Well Bank
- The Lower Chequer and 21 Crown Bank
- 22 Front Street/47 Church Street
- 1 and 2 Old Hall Gardens (re-built)
- 34 High Street

Old Hall is the most striking and largest of the timber framed buildings, dated 1656. It has a substantial Sandstone flag roof. Until recently the building was on the national register of Buildings at Risk but has been refurbished and transformed into a successful pub/restaurant owned by Brunning and Price. It is now a social as well as historic focal point for the town centre.

It is possible that other buildings retain elements of earlier timber framed construction concealed within a later brick shell.

St Mary's Church is the dominant building in the area. Built in local Sandstone, the church was substantially remodelled in 1849 by George Gilbert Scott. It incorporates a tower with high open porch and undercroft, linking Church Street with High Street. The attractive, substantial stone boundary wall and railings around the perimeter exaggerate its historic significance and influence over the surrounding townscape.

The collective value of the historic buildings around the Cobbles cannot be underestimated. They amplify the historic quality of this space. All except the more recent Post Office/Ladbroke's building are listed, as is the war memorial at the entrance.

Townscape along High Street is complimented and enriched by a variety of 2 and 3 storey Georgian and Victorian buildings that align the street. Next to Old Hall is the former girl's school, with a distinctive 'U' plan twin gable onto the street frontage. The scale of buildings in this area helps to channel views.



Lower chequer/21 Crown Bank



Old Hall – grade I timber framed building



The tower of St Mary's Church

In Well Bank and Church Street modest terraced cottages step down the slope, flanking the edge of the streets. There are also a few buildings that are not statutorily listed but which help to reinforce the historic character of the area

Materials

Vernacular buildings are constructed of oak timber frames with wattle and daub or brick Noggin infill panels. Sham detailing is incorporated on some semi complete or extended timber framed buildings such as the Lower Chequer and the extension to the Black Bear. Jettying is evident on some buildings, for example, the cottages at 21 Crown Bank and 10 Well Bank. Historically these timber framed buildings had Reed thatch roofs, as at the Black Bear. However, all other timber framed buildings have been re-roofed with slate or plain clay tiles (a reflection of their adaptation in the 19th and 20th centuries). It is unclear whether the Sandstone roofing on Old Hall is a later adaptation, or contemporary to its construction, given the status of the building as the manor house.

Later buildings are predominantly in brick, with earlier examples constructed in handmade brindled Cheshire brick, probably produced in the town. Later, Victorian/Edwardian buildings are constructed in a more regular, manufactured brick, (such as the cottages in Front Street with patterning in contrasting Staffordshire Blue brick and the smaller artisan cottages in Church Street).

Some building frontages have been painted, for example, the George, other High Street buildings and within the Square itself. Whilst this treatment creates variety and 'lightens' the street scene, it is uncertain how this is affecting the fabric of individual buildings.

Roofing is predominantly either Welsh Slate or clay plain tiles. However, many buildings have been re-roofed in more modern concrete tiles which detract from the historic character of the area.

Local detailing

There is significant variety in the local detailing within this character area. Many buildings have lost their original fenestration although there is still a predominance of timber windows and doors. In Church Street there are several properties that have uPVC replacement windows and there is extensive variety in window design.

Sashes are still evident in some buildings, both Georgian and Victorian, in a 8 over 8, 6 over 6 and 2 over 2 design, particularly in High Street, There are also examples of flush timber casements with fine glazing bars.

Old Hall retains leaded windows of 2 principal types, with the oldest, central portion of the building with small, diamond pane windows and the eastern wing with larger square panes.

Historic brick buildings are predominantly constructed in a Flemish bond with more limited use of English Garden Wall Bond, often using darker bricks within the snap header courses. The terraces in Front Street have a contrasting diaper Staffs blue detail on the front elevation.

Some historic shop fronts have been retained, particularly on the eastern end of High Street. Some have been refurbished or sensitive new fronts have been installed. There are several examples of less sensitive shop fronts however, for example 45 High Street, with its plastic fixed blinds, inappropriate shop windows and poor quality adaptation to the threshold.



Flemish bond brickwork and 8 over 8 Georgian Sash window, High Street



Inappropriate alterations to 45 High Street

Roofs are historically slate or clay tiled and many are still intact. A widely repeated characteristic is the use of projecting gables and roof dormers creating stepped frontages and roofscapes with visual interest. This is especially apparent on the terraces on Front Street, creating highly animated frontages. It is also characteristic of individual properties on High Street. This has been repeated in the new development at the bottom of Church Street.



Perpendicular gables and dormers on historic properties and on recent housing

Public realm

As noted previously, in addition to the cobbled square, cobbled surfaces characterise the streets in Crown Bank, Hawk Street, the northern pavement in Well Bank and thresholds on parts of High Street. In places the pavements are edged in slim profile Sandstone kerbs. There are also remnants of Staffs Blue pavers and stone sets in Crown Bank and High Street. Elsewhere road and pavement surfaces are in tarmac and concrete municipal slabs (High Street).

Immediately outside the square, there is riven Yorkstone paving and granite road surfacing, with tumble sets at the entrance to the Cobbles. Recent enhancement of the square has enlarged the Yorkstone margins of the space, linked by stone set pedestrian walkways within the cobbled areas.

Railings from the bridge along High Street to the Church create a boundary feature guiding you up the street.

Street lighting in High Street is relatively new and comprises simple metal columns with more ornate arms and lanterns, painted black. However, the columns are quite tall in comparison to the street's dimensions. In Church Street, the lighting is of more human scale, in a similar style and finish to that of High Street as is lighting on the Cobbles.

There is little street clutter and signage but in the eastern part of High Street, highway measures and markings create an engineered feel which impacts on the character of the street. In Church Street double yellow road markings are quite prominent. In the market place new contemporary metal and timber seating, planters and bins complement the character of the space.

Although not in really bad condition, the general floorscape needs maintenance and repair, particularly in High Street and the area around the pump at the intersection of Crown Bank, Well Street and Church Street. There is evidence of underlying historic cobbled surfacing that could be reinstated. Tarmac roads and highway markings undermine the historic character of streets in High Street, Well Bank and Church Street.



Historic surfaces in High Street and Crown Bank

St George's Walk is a key gateway into the heart of the area, but its poor quality modern character detracts from the historic core of the town centre. Inferior, uneven paving and lack of lighting exaggerates the poor quality of this route, which is made worse by the relationship with the vehicle access and blank elevation of Iceland's. The lanes are an important aspect of local distinctiveness, yet the public realm quality of Flat Lane and Warm Walls is poor. Misused as servicing areas by the Orient takeaway and Market Tavern, they have become neglected spaces, poorly maintained and blighted by antisocial behaviour.

Boundary walling is generally brick, with natural stone or blue brick copings. They are particularly influential in Front Street and Church Street. Sandstone walling around the church emphasises its landmark qualities, whilst walls to the front of Old Hall and the former Girl's School are attractive. At the intersection of the Cobbles with Penda Way a substantial brick wall defines the edge of the conservation area.



Brick/stone boundary walling, High Street



Brick wall at threshold to the Cobbles



Riven York stone paving and stone sets used around the edge of the Cobbles



The pathways leading up to St Mary's Church from High Street and Crown Bank create a unique public realm. The stone flags include re-used grave stones. The inscriptions create texture and character



Intersection of old and new surfaces in Crown Bank and High Street. Poor intersection in crown Bank with loose edge of tarmac overlying cobble street



View of the Cobbles from High Street

Green spaces and biodiversity

As previously described, this character area has a strong, landscape dominated character. To the east is the valley of the Brook and Dingle Lake. Both are significant ecological and landscape assets. This 'green lung' extends westward along High Street up to the churchyard. Within the churchyard there are a number of native mature trees, most of which are protected. The graveyard has an informal maintenance regime that further enhances its ecological value.

Another small green space is located at the junction of Well Bank, Church Street and Hawk Street with mature trees and grass. Planted front gardens to the fronts of properties in High Street, Well Bank, Church Street and Front Street further reinforce the naturalised and soft character of this part of the conservation area.

The extent of different types of green spaces is indicated on the plan in section 4.3 Spatial Analysis



Positive green spaces within the area – St Mary's Church Yard and between Hawk Street and Well Street

Intrusion or damage

The only areas that are intrusive or damaging are the buildings on the opposite side of High Street to the cobbles (25-27 High Street, Iceland and St George's Walk) and the post office site at the corner of the square with Crown Bank, (which is especially unpopular with the local community). In essence these undermine the historic containment of the square. But, in the longer term these sites offer the potential for enhancement around the edge of the square and for a comprehensive approach to sensitively regenerate the area south of High Street between St George's Walk and Town Mill, including the potential for improving the visibility of the mill from the square.

There is also the opportunity to improve the quality of shop fronts in the area, particularly on High Street and to address the frontage condition of some buildings, potentially through a grant scheme for the main town centre area. This approach has been employed in the past, the most recent example being Godfrey Williamson's delicatessen on the eastern side of the square.



The weaker edge, opposite the square on High Street

Godfrey Williams – a recent example of frontage enhancement

High Street and Hightown

This is the main commercial/retail area and is of mixed Georgian and Victorian character, with more modern 20th century insertions. The fine grain plot character on the south side of High Street is believed to originate from the medieval plot pattern. It comprises the area added onto the conservation area in 1996. Several showpiece buildings are located in this area and it is the civic heart of the town centre. The area's principal characteristics and significance is summarised below:

Prevailing or former uses and their influence on buildings

High Street has been the main retail street for several hundred years, accommodating shops and other commercial uses. Historically there would have been business and residential properties side by side, but expansion of commercial uses has long since displaced housing. Georgian, Victorian and 20th century redevelopment has overlaid the post medieval buildings, but in essence the High Street function has remained. The small plot sizes associated with medieval/post medieval townscape are especially evident on the south side of High Street.

High Town has a more planned character befitting its civic/municipal function, a use that arose during the mid to late 1800s when the Literary Institute and then the Town Hall and indoor market were built. These buildings have retained their community or civic use up to the present day. Elsewhere in Hightown there are two landmark public houses, the Swan and Chequers and the Wheatsheaf. Both are former coaching Inns, evidenced by the arched under crofts and yards. There are also two ornately detailed banks, the Natwest, formerly the Manchester District Bank and Lloyds TSB located next to the Literary Institute, originally the Savings Bank.

The dominant buildings within this area are the Town and Market Hall designed by the Nantwich architect Thomas Bower and the Literary Institution and Savings Bank situated in Hightown and designed by nationally renowned architect Sir George Gilbert Scott (designer of St Pancras Station and the Midland Hotel in London). Both are designed in the Gothic revival style and constructed in brick and are listed grade II.

Built in 1857 and financed by subscription, the Literary Institution was established as community reading rooms and still retains its community function today, managed by its Trustees. Sandbach Town Council presently occupies the ground floor of the building, but there is concern about the long term use of the building and its deteriorating fabric. It has ornate gothic arched windows on the ground floor which are dormered at first floor. The roof is steeply pitched and a hexagonal entrance tower marks the corner of the building. The design includes Scott's trademark use of contrasting detailing brickwork. The adjacent Savings bank Building has an ornate stone oriel window above the entrance doorway and diapered Staffordshire blue brickwork.



The Swan and Chequers



Sandbach Literary Institution



Sandbach Town Hall

The Town Hall was completed in 1889, and includes a market hall set behind a colonnaded entrance. The Town Council has recently acquired the Town and Market Hall and is proposing various changes and a more diverse usage to increase its viability. The indoor market includes a mix of fixed units and more temporary stalls. The Town Hall is accessed via the heavily arched entrance within the tower to the right of the Market Hall. There is a large hall/function room on the first floor. The square tower with roof lantern, heavy steeply pitched main roof, tracery windows and the entrance archway with heraldic panel and flanking statues emphasise both its civic qualities and its Gothic revival design.

There are several other listed buildings in this part of the Conservation Area, including the colonnaded fountain within the roundabout outside the Literary Institute, also designed by Bower but in the classical style, the Lion pub and 2 further Georgian properties on High Town.

A number of other unlisted buildings make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area:

- The Swan and Chequers
- The Natwest Bank
- The Wheatsheaf
- 2 Bradwell Road (RBS Bank)
- 1-11 Bold Street
- WH Smith
- Price City (although its ground floor frontage has been significantly altered)



Former Manchester & District Bank (now Natwest)

Highly ornate and detailed landmark buildings are a key characteristic of the Hightown area. These landmark buildings contain and enclose views within the central space, creating a showpiece, planned townscape. They incorporate a rich variety of detailing that include strong entrances, well designed corner or tower features, ornate stonework detailing, a variety of window styles but with a vertical emphasis. Consistent elements within these buildings are their construction in Cheshire or red brick, often embellished, and that roofs are of clay plain peg tiles or welsh slate, a reflection of their Victorian origins.

'The Swan' is a very dominant landmark building at the head of High Street, comprising a fine architectural composition purposely designed for the corner site contained by High town and Welles Street. It was re-built in 1893 on the site of the Old Swan by John Stringer and designed by the Manchester practice of Bird and Whitenbury. Key elements within the design are the stepped dutch gable incorporating the Swan Hotel lettering and motif topped by classical pediment; a brick and stone balustrade at first floor supported by a stone bay window, the swan lantern on the corner gable with its stepped dutch gable and ornate chimney stack. The Welles Street elevation is defined by the stone archway set within narrower stepped gable, with feature oriel window.



The Swan and Chequers

In High Street, the architecture is far more restrained. The most ornate building is the building occupied by Price City built in 1892 by the Co-operative Society. Above eye level it has a very striking façade, constructed in red brick with repeated gable detailing and ornate recessed brickwork framing the window on the corner with Warburton Way. The main façade is punctuated by gables with simple stone quoins and heads/sills.

The townscape on the southern side of High Street is more modest in scale and buildings have been quite badly altered in some instances. There are also a couple of modern buildings that are not positive to the area's townscape, most notably the building housing Boots.

Within this area there are several Georgian 3 storey buildings punctuating the otherwise 2 storey townscape, including the grade II listed Lion pub, but also a row of adjoining shop buildings (19 – 23 High Street). One of these units, the former HSBC Bank, has been heavily adapted, with a large blank first floor elevation and heavily modified ground floor. The building on the corner of High Town/ Hope Street is an attractive, well proportioned Georgian building

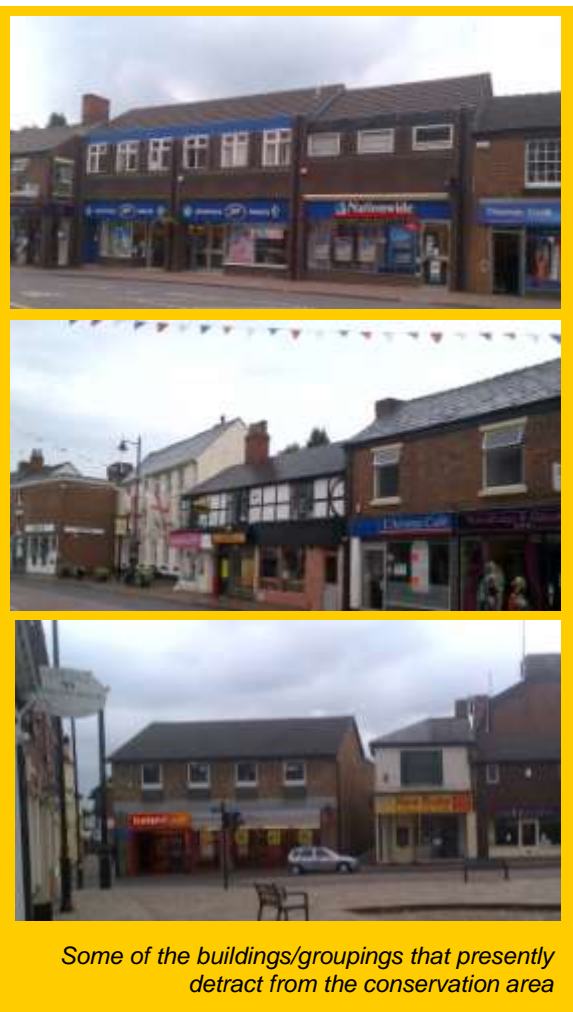


There are also remnant characteristics of cottage type buildings that pre-date the Georgian and Victorian phases in this area. 9 to 13 High Street are an interesting grouping, which appear to be a row of former cottages that have been heavily modified but retaining the original form.



On the north side of the High Street, the WH Smith building has an interesting 20th century art deco frontage in stone, but with the ground floor much altered by its modern shop front and ill proportioned, poor signage.

The Lion and other Georgian buildings in High Street



Some of the buildings/groupings that presently detract from the conservation area



Art Deco building, early 20th century building with stone façade at first floor



SAVINGS - BANK

18 54

The Savings Bank, Hightown

The units that turn the corner into Hightown, west of the modern boots building, also exhibit cottage characteristics but the frontages have been extensively altered with most features removed. The unit housing Blockbusters retains its Sash windows and is a grade II listed building.

In Bold Street, the parade of shops with art deco, metal and marble shop fronts creates a distinctive early modernist architectural character to the street scene.

Materials

The predominant materials within buildings are facing brick, both Cheshire and more consistent red brickwork such as is employed on the Town Hall and the Swan. Stone is generally used for high quality detailing on the landmark buildings but also more modestly on other buildings to define window sills and heads, quoins, surrounds and string courses. There are also several rendered/painted buildings within the area, including the Lion pub and Brooks butchers, a single storey building with a stepped parapet frontage. 9-13 High Street has a timber frame infilled with render at first floor level. The frame looks too regular to be original but has two unusual semi-circular timbers at either end. This external veneer could be concealing earlier fabric.



Art deco shop frontages, Bold Street



Brick is the predominant facing material

Roofing is primarily Welsh slate and clay plain tiles, but there are some examples of modern roofing comprising concrete interlocking and plain individual tiles. The main landmark buildings are roofed in clay tiles. Windows are still generally in timber but there are examples of inappropriate windows such as the multi-paned non opening windows in the William R. Shoes premises. At ground floor, the extent of change is much more widespread, with a variety of more modern metal and timber shop fronts, with tile stall riser and pillar detailing on some premises. Inappropriate modern brickwork and a modern shop front have been inserted into the otherwise noteworthy 6-8 High Street (Price City).

Local detailing

Again, as with the older part of the conservation area, Flemish Bond brickwork is the predominant brick pattern, but there is occasional use of Garden Wall Bond, generally restricted to lower status buildings and walling. Several buildings are heavily embellished with stonework and strong architectural elements. In particular the area is characterised by strong corner turning elements. Towers are present on the Literary Institute, 2 Bradwell Road and the Town Hall. On the Natwest Bank, a distinctive corner, comprising stone mullioned projecting triangular windows, sits above the entrance. Old photographs show that a tower once existed on this corner of the building.



Ornate detailing is a characteristic of many of the buildings in High Town

Robust doorways are a major element of the Victorian landmark buildings in Hightown, with ornate detailing emphasised in stone and brickwork. There is also a nice example of a simple Georgian doorway with semi circular fanlight in the listed building at the corner of High Town/Hope Street.



Robust doorway details within the High Street/Hightown character area

Oriel and feature windows are also a distinct feature of this part of the conservation area. They are evident on a variety of building types: 1-23 High Street (Georgian) 9-13 High Street (pre Georgian cottages), the Swan, situated above the coach arch, on the Savings Bank over the entrance doorway (both Victorian) and above the art deco shop fronts at 7-13 Bold Street (early 20th century)



Oriel and other ornate feature windows in the conservation area

On several Georgian and Victorian properties 8 over 8 and 2 over 2 timber sash windows are still evident in High Street and High Town. Timber sashes and casements of various types are evident in some of the grander Victorian buildings, whilst remnant timber casements exist on some of the older cottage buildings, such as in 11 High Street (the Hot Spot). The Literary Institute, Savings Bank and Town Hall have metal framed windows set into stone mullions.

Eaves panels of sham timber framing with render infill panelling are used on the Swan and more fully on part of the frontage of the Wheatsheaf pub. It is also used on the dormers of the Natwest Bank.

Public realm

Whilst the area is characterised by extensive space between buildings, the public realm is dominated by the impact of vehicles using this space. At peak times the area is clogged by queuing vehicles. Engineered measures have been installed into the street, to calm traffic. The roundabout in Hightown, whilst not unattractive is an alien feature for an historic town centre that divides the space. The one real benefit is that it safeguards the listed fountain that has been placed within it. At the junction of High Street and High Town a highway feature has been created to restrict vehicle movement to one way and to provide the start of a cycle lane down High Street, with pedestrian refuges designed into the highway on Hightown. These features, although well intended at the time, undermine the area's spatial quality and emphasise vehicular priority.



Public realm within High Street Hightown is adversely affected by highway design and traffic

Surfacing in the Hightown/High Street area is in red brick herringbone paving, presumably installed in the 1980s or 1990s when the cycleway and highway features were installed. The vehicular carriageway and disabled parking area outside Price City is in tarmac. Away from the main areas, some pavements are surfaced in concrete slabs, the remainder in tarmac, as are road surfaces, edged by concrete kerbs. There are some remnants of historic surfaces, such as the stone sets in the area to the rear of the Literary Institute and behind 2 Bradwell Road.

The two principal community buildings have very modest and quite poor thresholds. There is the potential to re-design the space in Hightown to improve the setting and usability of foreground spaces as part of enhancing the use and profile of these buildings.

The street lighting in the area is a continuation of the lighting in the eastern part of High Street. Whilst there isn't a huge amount of street clutter, there is the potential to further declutter the public realm as part of any enhancements to reverse some of the highway works previously undertaken. Lighting could be building mounted subject to negotiation and this should be explored where practicable. Highway signage should also be audited to see if less or smaller more appropriately designed signage could be achieved.



The foreground to Town Hall

The CCTV column at the junction of High Town and High Street an unattractive feature in one of the key views within the town centre. Whilst it fulfils an important town centre function, it is intrusive in the townscape. More sensitive locations for the camera should be explored. Other features such as hanging basket stands and planters create an element of additional clutter but they do help brighten the town centre during summer months. Again, as part of public realm enhancement then there may be the potential to still achieve seasonal colour but also further reduce street clutter. If positive space is created outside the Town Hall and Literary Institute then there will be scope to create additional seating in these areas without impacting on public realm quality.

The small incidental space outside Fragola Café at the junction of Hightown and Old Middlewich Road is used by the café in the warmer months and could be an attractive, modest space as part of the overall public realm of Hightown, but, it would benefit from better surfacing and potentially soft landscaping.

The listed K6 telephone box outside the Town Hall is a welcome addition to the public realm of Hightown.



Features within the public realm of High Town

Green spaces and biodiversity

There is little or no green space given the hard character of the public realm. Localised opportunities for urban greening could be explored as part of public realm enhancement but this needs to be carefully assessed and designed so as not to detract from the Victorian, urban character of this part of the conservation area.

Detractors

There are various detractors but they are on a smaller individual scale than in the eastern part of High Street. However, there are more widespread general issues that have a cumulative negative effect upon the historic character of the area.

The main detractor in this area is the modern infill development of Boots/Nationwide. Close by, the former Ethel Austen, now partly occupied by Costa, gives the impression of being partly occupied which has further impacted upon the exterior appearance of the building. The Hot Spot, and to an extent adjoining frontages, are highly prominent and visible and of a quality that do not generally reflect an historic conservation area. Recent works to the shop front at the Hot Spot have tidied its appearance but it has been implemented as a contemporary frontage when a traditional design would have been more appropriate.

More widely, the quality of advertising and shop frontages is a cause of concern has also been highlighted by the local community. Over many years the appearance of the main shopping street has been continuously eroded by poor quality building adaptation and standardised, inappropriate signage. If this process continues unchecked, then it could place this part of the conservation area at risk in the longer term. The visual quality of the High Street is a factor that is undermining its vitality, at a time when it is vulnerable to changing trends and pressures.

The poor quality of the area's public realm is also a significant detractor. This too is undermining the attractiveness and performance of the town centre. The previous public realm works have created a number of issues, and, in hindsight, it has diluted the area's historic character and weakened the setting for the area's main architectural assets.

Finally the impact of traffic and the highway measures employed to counter it have also quite severely eroded the area's character, making it an area designed for vehicles rather than one where pedestrians have at least equal priority. It has also taken away some of the market town character.

High quality, sensitive public realm upgrade, informed by a re-assessment of pedestrian and vehicular movement, along with investment in the fabric of buildings, is the only way of reversing the impacts that have occurred over many years upon the character of this part of the conservation area.



Poor shop fronts and public realm detract from High Street/High Town

Middlewich Road and Wesley Street (including areas proposed for inclusion)

Occupying the western edge of the conservation area, the area is of relatively modest scale and is a combination of pre-Victorian, Victorian and post war townscape. The buildings situated to the north of Middlewich Road and aligning old Middlewich Road represent the earliest phase of development, as they aligned the original High Street. The conservation area is presently split, sitting either side of Wesley Avenue, excluding the office buildings on the eastern side and the open area of parking and highway opposite the pedestrian crossing to Ashfield's and Aldi.

Buildings generally align the street, except for short sections of Middlewich Road, which have walled front gardens and in Wesley Street, where the clarity of frontage is weakened, especially on the eastern side of the street.

Prevailing or former uses and their influence on buildings

Historically, the area was a mix of retail, other commercial and residential uses. Middlewich Road (including the truncated section) is a continuation of the old High Street, with properties shown aligning the road on the Tithe Map of 1840. Whilst some units may have been built to include retail use, the terraces to the west of Chapel Street and some of the properties to the east were probably built as houses, but then changed to shops over time. There is still a lively mix of uses within this area today.

An early chapel was located at the corner of Chapel Street and Middlewich Road (the building with the curved gable end). The Methodist Church, the key landmark in the area, was built in 1872 by John Stringer. The minister for the chapel lived in the adjoining house, the Hollies. This property is presently vacant, as is the adjoining site owned by Wrights printers (a former garage building). To the rear of the Methodist Church is the former Sunday School, now a community centre. Its frontage onto Chapel Street is particularly attractive.

Within the area proposed to be extended is Foden's Terrace, a terrace of artisan cottages built at right angles to Middlewich Road. This is the last historic association with the Foden name in the town centre (The ERF factory was located on the opposite side of Middlewich Road and closed in 2002). Further west, separated by a short terrace of houses, is the former Christian Science reading room, now occupied by the Orient restaurant and behind, the Drill Hall, which is still in use today.

Sitting immediately behind the Middlewich Road frontage, adjacent to the Wesley Chapel site, is a former Victorian factory currently owned by Wright's printers. This results in a different scale and type of townscape with a courtyard entrance and 2 and 3 storey buildings enclosing the space.

The development of Old Mill Road has exposed the rear elevations of some buildings on Old Middlewich Road that were never intended to be visible, whilst Pool Alcock Solicitors premises, a listed timber frame building, is in a very exposed location made worse by unsympathetic extensions. The negative townscape backs onto a key route and gateway into the conservation area.



Methodist Chapel



Former Christian Science meeting rooms, Middlewich Road

Qualities of buildings

On Middlewich Road, there is a small terrace of grade II listed former cottages, having been quite badly altered, but with remnants of early shop fronts and deep set, casement windows. They are now in use as hot food outlets (the Bangla Chef and Express Cantonese takeaway). Poole Alcock's, is a grade II timber framed former cottage, off Old Middlewich Road, but its fabric and setting have been heavily compromised by alterations and extensions and its proximity to the road.



Bangla Chef & Express Cantonese Takeaway

On Wesley Avenue, the grade II listed Wesley Chapel and the adjoining Hollies are a positive grouping. Both are classically inspired. On Old Middlewich Road (south side) there are two 3 storey Georgian properties, the premises of the Charcoal Balti House, with ornate stone window and door openings and a pediment surround to a first floor window. However the buildings have been substantially altered with uPVC windows and doors and painting of stonework.



Methodist Church and the Hollies, Wesley Avenue

The chapel on Bradwell Road appears, on face value, to be a relatively uninteresting building, however from the other side of the road and from Wesley Avenue its ornate roof lantern with coloured glazing becomes visible and is attractive.

2 Chapel Street is an attractive corner turning building with an historic splayed corner shop front with the first floor supported by a cast column and historic doorway and some early windows.



Historic factory located behind 9 Middlewich Road

Several unlisted buildings make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area:

- The Hollies, Wesley Street
- The Chapel on Bradwell Road (principally because of its decorative roof lantern)
- Factory behind 9 Middlewich Road
- Wesley Cottage, Middlewich Road
- 2 Chapel Street (corner building)
- Scout Centre, 4-6 Chapel Street
- The dental surgery, 7 Middlewich Road
- The former Christian Science meeting room 67 Middlewich Road
- Drill Hall, Middlewich Road
- Charcoal Balti, Old Middlewich Road



Corner turning design of 2 Chapel Street

Materials

Facing materials on buildings are predominantly Cheshire brick, with a red, smooth brick on the former Iron Grey pub. Roofing is mainly slate and plain clay tile but some have been replaced by modern concrete interlocking and plain tiles. Given the uniformity of the roofline on groupings of properties on Middlewich Road and Chapel Street, brick chimneys are particularly important in punctuating the terraces.

Other materials in the area include the original timber framed part of the Poole Alcock building and some buildings have been rendered or painted, including the Hollies and 11-21 Middlewich Road (the older, former cottages).

Generally walling is in brick with brick or stone copings. The only metal railings on Middlewich Road are those above the dwarf boundary wall of Butcher and Barlow Solicitors (the recessed listed Georgian part of the premises) and those above the boundary wall of Wesley cottage. Neither is original. The wall to Wesley Cottage is of more significance, with its bow top returns and painted stone coping. This helps to characterise the building. Insensitive 'art stone' walling has been erected in front of the terraces to the east of Wesley House, detracting from the street scene.

Local detailing

Many of the residential properties have been altered insensitively, both within the existing conservation area and in the area west of Chapel Street, principally through the replacement of windows and doors in uPVC. A number of retail and commercial premises have also suffered similar alterations and poor quality shop fronts. However, this does not affect the overall integrity of the area and is of a scale that, with a concerted effort, could be turned around in the longer term. Middlewich Road is an important gateway into the town and therefore improvements on this street could help improve impressions of the area and the town more generally.

Certain properties have retained their original windows. Butcher and Barlow and Wesley Cottage have retained timber Sash windows (6 over 6 and 2 over 2 respectively). The Methodist Church has attractive, inset arched windows, with stained glass outer lights. The rear façade of the Wesley Centre has also retained its timber windows, which contribute to the architectural significance of the building.

The chapel itself is quite monumental in scale in this setting, with its symmetrical frontage defined by a dramatic stone portico framing the entrance, gable pediment and stone detailing. The Hollies, although less monumental, is also ornate, with classical rounded window pediments and a central triangular pediment at first floor over the arched doorway.

As with other parts of the town centre, the predominant brick bond is Flemish but there are also examples of Garden Wall Bond.

Oriel windows are also a feature of some buildings in this area. At present several shops on Bradwell Road between the apartment building and RBS Bank are located outside the conservation area. They have been heavily altered but the works could be resolved and two have Oriel windows (again altered). The former Iron Grey pub, again in an area excluded from the conservation area, has a central Oriel supporting a projecting roof gable.



Brick the predominant facing material in the area



Effect of traditional brick walling undermined by use of modern 'Artstone' in foreground



6 over 6 sash windows in this listed Georgian property. Also not the panelled door surround with pediment and dentil moulding to fascia board

Public realm

The public realm in the area consists of streets, pavements and incidental spaces surfaced in tarmac with concrete kerbs. Part of Middlewich Road is surfaced in red herringbone brick paving as a continuation of the paving in Hightown. In Wesley Avenue, the public realm is particularly poor. The frontages of the office buildings is delineated by parking and is open and exposed, creating a poor setting for the Wesley Chapel and the Hollies. The tarmac surfacing and surfacing of pavements is in relatively poor condition. Old Middlewich Road also has tarmac pavements and road surface but is not in quite as bad a condition but it is heavily engineered in character.



The cumulative impact of car dominance, poor quality buildings and floorscape upon the street scene

Middlewich Road has been truncated as a consequence of the Old Mill Road highway realignment and has created an area of dead space at the gateway to the conservation area when crossing from the health centre and Aldi.

In Chapel Street there has been some upgrade of the public realm including modest soft works at the junction with Bradwell Road.

The traffic signals at the junction of Chapel Street and Middlewich Road result in significant street clutter and an engineered character. The appearance of the street is further affected by the standard galvanised lighting columns, the equivalent of 3 storeys high in a relatively narrow street environment



Pedestrian arrival point from Ashfields

Historic Staffordshire blue paving is visible in front of Foden Terrace, in the factory courtyard behind 9 Middlewich Road and there are also remnant stone sets in the alley/yard next to the Orient restaurant. These need to be protected in the future.



Remnant traditional paving materials: stone sets and Staffordshire blue brick paving within the area

Green spaces and biodiversity

The area has an urban character and therefore there is no actual green space within the area. Pockets of landscape are located on Chapel Street (adjacent to the small car park and at the junction with Bradwell Road). Landscaping to the frontage of the Ashfield's medical centre has no positive bearing on the setting of the conservation area, which is affected by the scale of the Ashfield building and its lack of active frontage. The impact of Aldi is even worse with its highly dominant form and inactive frontage addressing the conservation area.



Landscaping at corner of Chapel Street and Bradwell Road

Detractors

The main detractor in this area is the spatial and architectural quality in Wesley Avenue that undermines the setting of the Wesley Chapel and The Hollies. The Sandbach Enterprise centre and adjacent office building provide valuable business accommodation for the town but they also have a significant detrimental impact on the character of the conservation area. Whilst they are presently outside the conservation area, it is proposed that they be included to ensure that future regeneration is much more sensitive to this location and delivers enhancement to the Wesley Street area.

A further associated detractor is the area of dead space at the end of Old Middlewich Road. This and the adjoining car park for Poole Alcock create a very poor entrance into the conservation area made worse by the engineered character of Middlewich Road, the tarmac pavement surfacing and the attempts to provide a cycle lane that seems to vanish abruptly. This and the quality of the street down to High town create a very poor pedestrian gateway. Car parking in this area further amplifies its pedestrian unfriendly and unwelcoming character.

At present the vacant site comprising the Hollies and the adjoining garage are adversely affecting the character of the area. This should be resolved once the site is re-developed, as long as this is of the appropriate quality and retains the Hollies as part of the scheme.



The negative impact upon the character of the area arising from vacant sites/buildings, extensive areas of dead space and poor quality buildings

Finally, the general erosion of character of both commercial and residential properties arising from piecemeal change to windows and doors and exterior appearance, and the insertion of poor quality modern shop fronts and inappropriate advertising on certain commercial properties has cumulatively undermined the historic and architectural interest of the area. If left unchecked this will only worsen, threatening the wider conservation area.



Eroded character of properties on Middlewich Road

FODENS
TERRACE
UNADOPTED

Foden Terrace, Middlewich Road

Hope Street

Prevailing or former uses and their influence on buildings

Hope Street originated as a back lane situated behind the medieval High Street connecting to other lanes and alleys including Flat Lane and a continuation of the back lane to the rear of the southern end of High Street down to Old Hall evident on the Tythe Map (but now extinguished).

In post medieval times, up to the Georgian and Victorian period, Hope Street developed into a second street as part of the expansion of the town, whilst retaining its servicing function for premises on High Street. Cottages, Regency town houses and a Victorian Chapel and school room were constructed. Latterly housing has developed in the lane behind Hope Street resulting in an informal green edge to the conservation area.



Attractive Georgian Villa property that helps to characterise Hope Street

The Hope Chapel and attached school room are the two primary buildings in the area, with the street being re-named as a consequence of the presence of the Chapel.

Qualities of buildings

There are 3 listed buildings within Hope Street, all grade II. The most noteworthy is the Hope Chapel and former school room. The chapel has a date stone of 1836. At the entrance to Hope Street from Hightown is a modest late Georgian building attached to the grander Georgian property fronting onto Hightown, both being listed grade II.

Immediately adjoining the former school room of Hope Chapel is a well proportioned Georgian property finished in painted Stucco, set slightly further back from the street than the chapel, listed grade II.

On the opposite side of Hope Street is a terrace of 3 storey Georgian townhouses that front almost directly onto the street. Again these have pleasing proportions as a grouping. Surprisingly these properties are not listed. It is suggested that these be identified as making a positive contribution to the special character of the conservation area.



Hope Chapel

Further to the south, the street narrows as it approaches Flat Lane and is aligned by earlier cottage properties. 15 Hope Street has a Georgian door surround and fanlight, whilst no. 13, which adjoins this property, has been rendered, obscuring evidence of any previous use.

The yards and outbuildings of properties on High Street align the eastern edge of the street, contained by walls, gates and fencing. An extended range of outbuildings projecting from the rear of the Lion pub terminates, gable end onto Hope Street. The form and detailing suggest this was probably stabling.

Materials

Cheshire brick and render/painted brickwork are the dominant materials within the area. Flemish and bond is used on Hope Chapel and the school room and on the end terrace of the town houses opposite. 2 of these properties have painted brickwork.

11 Hope Street, The Georgian villa on the west side of Hope Street, also has painted brickwork and stone detailing. 13 Hope Street has been rendered and painted.

6 – 8 Hope Street with painted brickwork



In the Gardens, a relatively large cottage on the frontage of the lane has been rendered and painted. This along with changes to fenestration has deprived it of much of its historic characteristics, although it is quite a strong local landmark drawing views up the lane.

There is a mix of slate and plain tiled roofing.

Local detailing

8 over 8 sash windows are present in 11 Hope Street, whilst the Georgian terrace has a mix of windows, including uPVC that adversely affects the grouping. Replacement timber windows have been installed in the Hope Chapel, whilst the windows in the School room, although timber, look like long standing replacements to the originals.

The Georgian 3 storey villas have 6 panelled doors with brick arched headers and fanlights. Windows on these properties are framed by stone lintels and sills.

The chapel has elongated windows with arched heads in contrasting brickwork. The northern gable has a framed doorway which has a flat pediment supported by pillars. The school room is less ornate with stone and brick pointed arch heads, a vertical boarded double door with fanlight and flattened roof apex with decorative ironwork

The adjoining villa to the school has simple classical detailing, with an attractive moulded wood pilaster door case with pediment and tracery fanlight. 15 Hope Street also has an attractive Georgian doorway with tracery fanlight.

Public realm

The street is part pavement part road, and has an informal character. It is mainly surfaced in tarmac but there are areas of Victorian staffs blue paving and where the street narrows to the south, cobbles and sandstone edging are exposed. There is also a short section of concrete paving slabs. Generally speaking the floorscape is in poor condition

Railings and low stone and brick walls are situated in front of Hope Chapel and 11 Hope Street and 8 Hope Street. All railings are reproductions. 6 and 10 Hope Street have hedging to the front boundaries.



8 over 8 sash window



Elongated arched windows, Hope Chapel

The yard to the Lion is bounded by a Cheshire brick wall that appears to have been partially rebuilt with part in a Flemish Bond. Further down the street there are wire fences enclosing the rear of properties on High Street. A high brick wall encloses the rear of Town Mill.

A well detailed brick wall with stone coping contains the edge of the Natwest car park at the entrance to Hope Street, whilst the building itself has a dwarf stone wall and railings on its Hope Street frontage.

There are long views of both Town Mill and the Town Hall tower from Hope Street that should be protected to help anchor Hope Street within the town centre.



Staffordshire blue paving and railings set on a stone plinth

Green spaces and biodiversity

There are no formal spaces or landscape features in Hope Street but there are trees in yards at the southern end and also trees aligning the rear car park to the Natwest bank, beside the lane leading to the Gardens. Residents of Hope Street brighten the area in the spring and summer with a variety of seasonal planting along the street within gardens and on buildings.

The Gardens is a green oasis with mature trees, gardens and open areas, creating a strong contrast with the harder areas of the town centre. It has the feel of a village in a central urban setting and is a remnant of how the edges of the town centre may well have been before its 20th century urbanisation.



The Gardens has a very distinct green character that contrasts positively with the urban qualities of Hope Street



Detractors

There are several unsightly buildings in Hope Street. The small car park and brick building attached to 6 Hope Street create a negative impression on entry to the street. Rear plots of the former HSBC and other High Street units given the impression of vacancy and neglect at the southern end of the street. The yard and car park to the Lion is contained by the substantial boundary wall.

Parking and cars can undermine the quality of the area and lots of frontage parking occurs within the curtilage of the former Hope Chapel, schoolroom and the adjoining Georgian property.



Frontage parking is a characteristic in parts of Hope Street

The condition of the street surfacing gives the impression of Hope Street being run down, despite the efforts of residents and businesses. This in conjunction with vacant/derelict sites and a low concentration of buildings creates the conditions for antisocial activity, especially because of the proximity to the pub.

Discussion with residents has highlighted that the area has experienced significant levels of antisocial behaviour over many years, much of which is associated with the Lion. Although this has improved recently with the arrival of a new landlord, the situation could change and therefore concerted effort is needed to prevent Hope Street becoming a hot spot of antisocial and criminal activity once again. It should therefore be targeted as part of the Heritage Crime response in the town.

The Hope Street Project was set up some 6 or so years ago to bring about transformation of the street and to drive out this antisocial activity. The project needs to be revived and updated so that an approach suited to the present day, acknowledging current financial constraints, can be developed.



Graffiti in the lane off Hope Street – a sign of the antisocial activity affecting this area

Green Street/Welles Street

This late 19th century terraced suburb lies to the north west of the historic core of the town centre. It was added to the conservation area in 1995, along with the Middlewich Road, Chapel Street and Wesley Street area. Its townscape is set out in a regular grid layout, with Welles Street and Green Street leading westward from Congleton Road. The area is predominantly residential but with commercial uses closest to the town centre, particularly in Green Street.



Green Street - long views created by the grid pattern of terraced streets

The linear form of the streets creates long views. Looking south down Welles Street the Town Hall tower is a strong terminating landmark in that view.

Prevailing or former uses and their influence on buildings

The area is a planned area of townscape, with formal terraced streets linking into Bold Street and connected by a short linking street connecting Green and Welles Street.

Historically, the area was likely to have been predominantly residential but subsequently more retail and other commercial uses expanded into the area. The 'Ring o Bells' pub is a purposely designed Victorian public house, contemporary with the street and is an attractive corner building on Green Street. There are also a couple of industrial buildings within the townscape, the larger one on Welles Street, now converted to apartments and re-named William Court and the smaller on Green Street, still in commercial use. A character factory/commercial building is located at the northern end of Green Street and part is in use as a car repair workshop.



The 'Ring o Bells' - a Victorian planned pub set within the housing area

In Welles Street, retail and other commercial properties now occupy much of the frontage up to its junction with Bold Street, whilst on Green Street the extent of commercial uses is more limited, with greater mixing with houses.



*Victorian shop premises, corner of
Welles Street and Bold Street*

The terraced housing and associated amenities were laid out to accommodate the town's workers from the various mills and other industries operating in the town late in the 19th century. An attractive 3 storey Victorian corner shop is located at the corner of Bold Street and Green Street

Qualities of buildings

The majority of properties are terraced properties of the same footprint and format, but with subtle variation of individual character, presumably because they were built by different interests over a period of time. This continuity creates a consistent building form aligning the streets. The flat topography exaggerates the linear character of the terraces and therefore the vertical punctuation created by the arrangement and proportions of windows and doorways is important in balancing elevations and the wider street scene. Whilst not highly visible, from the other side of streets, the continuity of the roofline is punctuated by the regularity of brick chimneys.

Occasional non-residential buildings such as the 'Ring o Bells' pub and the factory buildings help to create focal elements in the street scene. A three storey building in Welles Street is located focally at the end of the connecting street from Green Street.

Materials

Properties are for the most part constructed in brick, mainly in a Flemish bond. Bricks are generally brindled red. The gable of 8 Congleton Road (Regent Salon) is constructed in a smooth red brick with terracotta detailing, an embellishment that is uncharacteristic of the simple detailing found elsewhere in the area.

A newer building at the northern end of Welles Street is constructed in more modern brown brick. 1 Welles Street is a modern frontage building constructed in a pale cream brick with concrete interlocking roof tiles, concealing a larger, historic building behind.

A number of individual buildings within the area have been either completely or partially rendered painted shades of white or cream. Although this does not unduly harm the overall character of the area, it may be affecting the fabric of buildings. The use of painted render on the ground floor of 3 and 5 Welles Street does however detract from the historic appearance of the street. Two residential properties in Welles Street have been pebble dashed and clad in art stone.

The quality of shop fronts in the area is mixed, being a combination of traditional timber and modern, the latter detracting from the character of the street environment, particularly on Welles Street because of the concentration of retail uses and the discordant character it creates. The plastic fixed awnings and uPVC shop front and windows on 'Kev's Chippy' detract from the character of the property and the street. There are several positive examples of historic or well designed replacement shop fronts in Welles Street that help to enrich and reinforce the historic character, including the Beer Emporium, Demeter Foods, health food shop, the recent shop front on 14 Welles Street and the stove shop at 19 Welles Street.

The 'Ring o Bells' has retained its historic windows and doorway, albeit its colour scheme is quite vivid in the townscape and elements of its signage and lighting could be improved.



Some traditional shop fronts but many have been adapted and the quality of signage is quite poor

Signage in the area is generally quite poor, including some plastic fascias, box signage and projecting signs mounted high on elevations. This undermines the positive impact arising from the better quality shop fronts within the area.

Traditional roofing materials in the area are a mix of slate and plain clay tiles. These have not been too badly eroded by property owners, but there are examples of concrete tiles on some properties.

The majority of windows and doors in the residential parts of the area have been replaced, a high proportion of which are in uPVC which substantially erodes its consistency and visual character.

Local detailing

The area is characterised by a relatively simple building form and detailing comprising of stone or brick window heads and sills, some doorways have arched or squared openings incorporating fanlights. Eaves are very simply detailed with timber fascia boards, plain brick and also exposed rafter feet. On the former factory in Welles Street, more ornate corbelled eaves are evident.

A couple of properties in Green Street have retained their ornate moulded door heads and fanlights, which are an attractive, more polite detail in comparison to the artisan terraces elsewhere in the street.

Some sash windows remain in situ on commercial properties, including the health food shop on the corner of Welles Street and Bold Street with 2 over 2 Victorian sashes. 8-10 Welles Street has 1 over 1 sash windows with central mullions. The recently converted factory has replacement 1 over 1 Sash windows. The small factory in Greet Street has metal framed windows with horizontal emphasis.



Shop premises are more varied but there are several commercial buildings in the area that have retained traditional timber shop fronts.

8 Congleton Road has a side elevation with attractive terracotta string detailing.

The owners of 24 Welles Street have endeavoured to stay true to the spirit of the conservation area by retaining the timber top opening casements and inserting a reproduction timber door and fanlight, painted in heritage colours.

Rectangular brick chimneys, some with dentil detail and decorative chimney pots are a roofscape characteristic in the area.



24 Welles Street – sensitively maintained property compared to those around it. Also note the rhythm of chimneys in the street scene

Public realm

The public realm in the area is tired and uncharacteristic of an historic area. There are few remnants of historic surfacing. Blue brick paving is evident in Green Street, whilst stone sets remain in the yard of the converted factory on Welles Street.

Elsewhere, surfacing is either in tarmac or concrete paving, areas of which are in relatively poor condition. Roads are surfaced in tarmac but stone set channels are evident in places.

There is little street furniture and signage in the area except street signage to indicate no entry and one way streets. Street lighting is more intrusive because of its excessive scale, circa 3 storey height and design (galvanised standard street lighting) Painted metal street name plates mounted on buildings is a characteristic. Within the streets, above ground telephone wire and timber polls introduce further visual clutter

Long views from Welles Street toward the town hall are the primary view in the conservation area.

Green spaces and biodiversity

The only green spaces within the area are private gardens. Some of the gardens of properties on Green Street are exposed on the Welles Street frontage, with garages and outbuildings. The garden of 19 Green Street has several semi-mature trees.

To the north of Green Street/Welles Street there is a larger area of open space with smaller spaces associated with a new connecting road (these are all outside the conservation area boundary).

Detractors

There are no significant individual detractors but there are several premises that have a negative impact upon the historic character of the area.

The new shop unit 1-3 Welles Street is in an inappropriate material and has a poor quality shop front. It also conceals an historic building behind it, the Primitive Methodist Chapel. 36 Green Street is an inappropriate building in the street. It does not respond positively to the local characteristics of the street in terms of materials and building design. The adjoining garages and exposed gardens further to the south and the large timber building at the street corner collectively detract from the enclosed, urban character of the street.



Some historic materials but most pavements are in concrete slabs or tarmac that detract from the area



View toward Town Hall from Welles Street



Open space on the edge of the conservation area



Detractor area in Green Street

In more general terms, the erosion of character arising from the piecemeal loss of historic features, particularly affecting residential properties, has severely undermined the historic interest of parts of Green Street and Welles Street. In the mixed use area to the south of both streets there is retention of more historic character and the potential to try and reverse the decline in the area's historic fabric. Widespread installation of satellite dishes has further eroded the character of the area. The quality of paving and surfacing in the area further detracts from historic character, as does the standard, oversized street lighting.

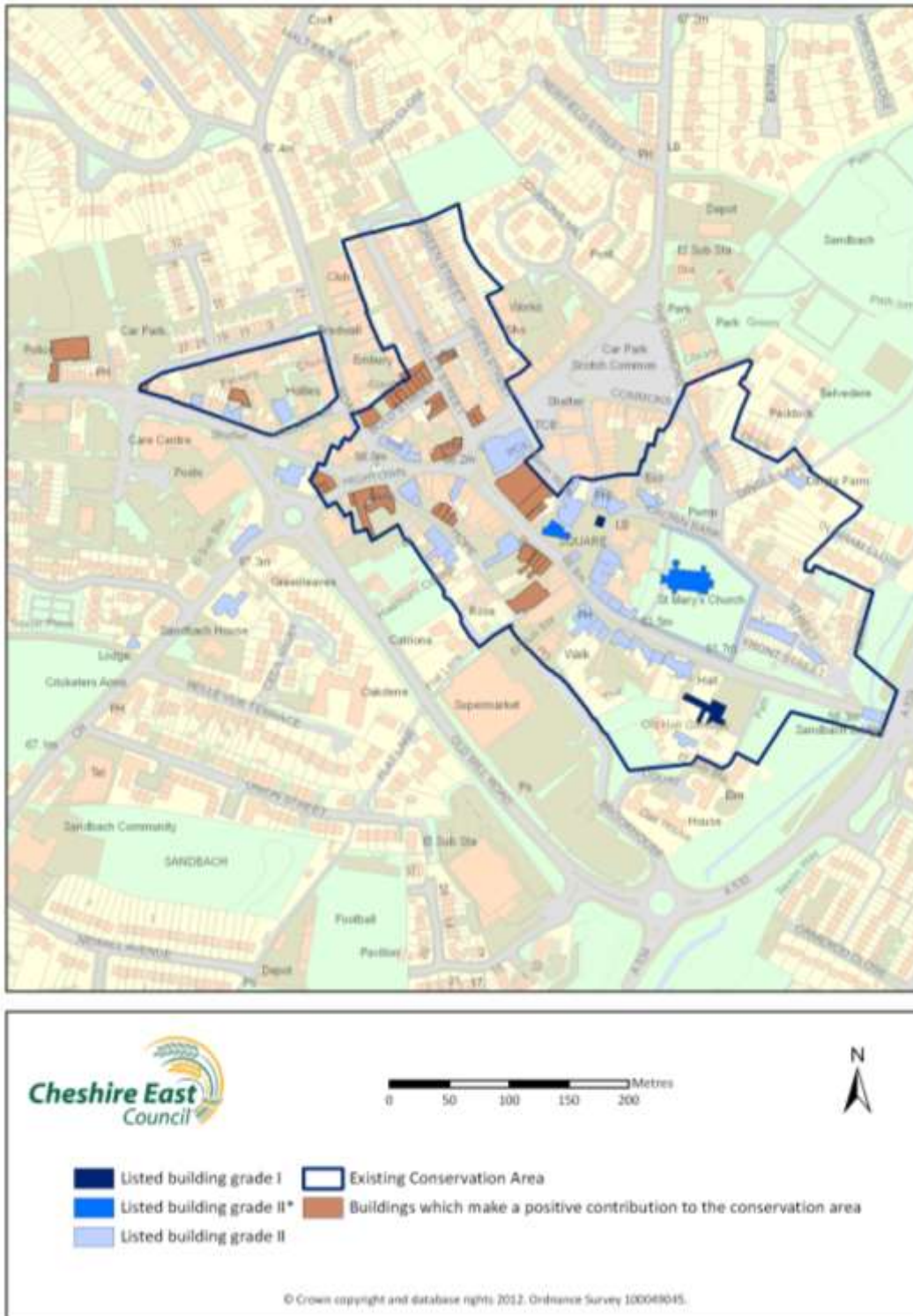
Key issues arising from the character area assessment

<p>Historic core</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A concentration of vernacular timber framed buildings • Extensive areas of historic surfacing that should be preserved/enhanced • Church is a key landmark in various views • Land associated with Dingle Farm important to setting of CA • Other peripheral areas to the east south and west important to the setting of the CA • Market square is the key civic space but affected by inappropriate buildings • Mature landscape a key characteristic which needs to be sustained • Many properties have traditional frontages but some have poor quality • Lanes are important historic elements but misused and in poor condition • St George's Walk a key connection into CA but creates a poor gateway
<p>High Street/ High Town</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong built character with little landscaping • Several civic buildings but with poor foreground spaces • Grander scale in terms of buildings and spaces between • Mixed character area focused upon ornate Victorian Gothic architecture • Erosion of character arising from poor shop fronts/signage • Tired public realm that does not reinforce the historic character • Potential to enhance public spaces in Hightown • Traffic dominates the area at peak times • Poor gateway into the area from Middlewich Road
<p>Middlewich Road and Wesley Street</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation area presently divided by Wesley Avenue • Public realm in Wesley Avenue/Middlewich Road poor quality • The site associated with the Hollies detracts from the area • Townscape to the north west of Chapel Street worthy of inclusion due to early origins • Pedestrian gateway/route on Middlewich Road gives poor sense of arrival into CA • Sandbach Enterprise Centre and adjoining office a long term regeneration opportunity • Several traditional shopfronts but several have been inappropriately adapted • Car parking dominates the public realm
<p>Hope Street</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor quality of public realm of the area • Antisocial activity has been a big problem for the area • Some potential infill regeneration sites • Opportunity to create a better pedestrian link to High Street • The Gardens is an area of contrast with landscaped character • Some erosion of character as consequence of inappropriate works • Potential opportunity to re-launch the Hope Street project
<p>Green Street/Welles Street</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong views from Welles Street toward Town Hall • Several traditional shop fronts but others have been inappropriately adapted • Public realm is of relatively poor quality • Streets dominated by parked vehicles • Significant erosion of character due to changes to residential properties • Justification to consider removing parts of the area from the conservation area

General issues

Designated and non-designated assets

Pulling together the information contained in the character area descriptions, the following plan identifies the listed buildings within the assessment area by grade. It also identifies the non-designated assets, namely those buildings that make a positive contribution to the special interest of the area but which do not have sufficient individual merit to warrant statutory listing.



Map 9: Designated and non-designated assets

Neutral areas

There are several neutral areas within the conservation area that neither benefit nor detract from its character but which have the potential for active enhancement

- Small space next to Fragola off Hightown
- Area of frontage to 41-45 High Street
- Area around the pump/fountain at Crown Bank
- Yard area behind the Literary Institute and 2 Bold Street
- Area to the front of the Lower Chequer, Crown Bank
- Rear courtyard of the George, off St George's Walk

They are indicated on the plan below.

General condition

Overall the general condition of the conservation area is reasonable, with many owners managing and repairing their buildings appropriately. The re-use of Old Hall for such a successful business is a significant boost for the conservation area and should be seen as a flagship for the beneficial re-use and sensitive adaptation of historic buildings.

There are several heritage assets that are deemed to be at risk, even where discussions are taking place with owners and these are highlighted in the management proposals. There are also wider concerns within individual character areas about their deterioration over the longer term due to piecemeal unsympathetic alterations and repair to buildings, including widespread use of inappropriate cement mortar on both brick and stone buildings and structures.

The quality of the public realm in all areas is a cause for concern. There is a general deterioration in the floorscape of the conservation area and indications that ongoing maintenance is not keeping pace with the deterioration. Significant investment is needed in the conservation area over an extended period to upgrade streets and spaces in a sympathetic way to reinforce the historic character. The primary focus for public realm investment should be the main route through the town centre in High Street and High Town, with further ongoing investment in other areas as part of the general highways management programme. An appropriate management regime should be set up for the conservation area, managing streets, spaces and landscape in the public domain.

Problems, pressures and capacity for change

In many respects the conservation area still retains a strong historic character as outlined in this appraisal. However, much has changed since the first designation in 1970 and indeed since the last designation in 1995.

There are several key issues that could pose a significant threat to the conservation area or individual parts of it if they are not tackled. These issues are also highlighted within the Sandbach Town Plan and more generally in the Town Strategy. They are not set out in a particular order of priority and have informed the conservation area management themes and proposals set out in part 2 of this document.

- **Quality of new development** – some development that has taken place in the town centre has not been positive in respect to the historic character of the town, and is contributing to the erosion of its image and sense of place.
- **Quality of shop fronts and signage** – the High Street/High Town, Middlewich Road and Green/Welles Street areas have experienced a process of erosion of their character through unsympathetic and inappropriate shop front alteration and signage over many years.

- **Quality of householder alterations** – the Green Street/Welles Street area has been especially affected by the erosion of character caused by changes to windows and doors
- **Neglected/empty buildings & sites** – this gives a poor impression of the conservation area and makes it feel like it is an area in decline. This can perpetuate antisocial and criminal behaviour, deter investment and impact adversely on the quality of life for residents
- **Quality of key gateways and pedestrian routes** – the quality of entrances into the area generally create a poor first impression. The lanes which are an integral part of the character of the conservation area are generally in poor condition and subject to antisocial activity which deters their use
- **Quality of the public realm** – the general condition and quality is relatively poor and past works undertaken in the High Street/High Town area are unsympathetic to an historic market town. Significant public realm improvement is needed
- **Impact of vehicular traffic** – vehicular traffic and measures to manage it have an adverse impact on parts of the conservation area. Car parking also tends to dominate and undermine the character of the conservation area and some of the areas around its edge
- **Back land and opportunity sites** – there are several sites and areas that currently have a negative impact but which could provide opportunities, these are discussed and set out on the plan below

Longer term 'place shaping' opportunities

There are several opportunity sites, where heritage led or design sensitive regeneration could enhance the quality and character of the conservation area and its setting and which could also provide significant impetus to the regeneration of the wider town centre over the longer term. These along with the neutral areas discussed above are set out on the plan below



- St George's Walk, Iceland and the area around Town Mill (including modern frontage properties)
- Land to rear of 43-47 High Street
- The garage site off the Gardens
- The Hollies and adjacent garage site, Wesley Avenue
- Penda Way/Warm Walls/Little Common
- Site to the rear of 19-25 High Street
- Factory site owned by Wrights Printers, Middlewich Road
- Potentially part of the Lion car park (or its outbuildings)
- Works site off Commons Mill (including rear garaging)
- Sandbach Enterprise centre and adjoining office building
- Congleton Road Gateway (library, fire and ambulance station and vacant sites)

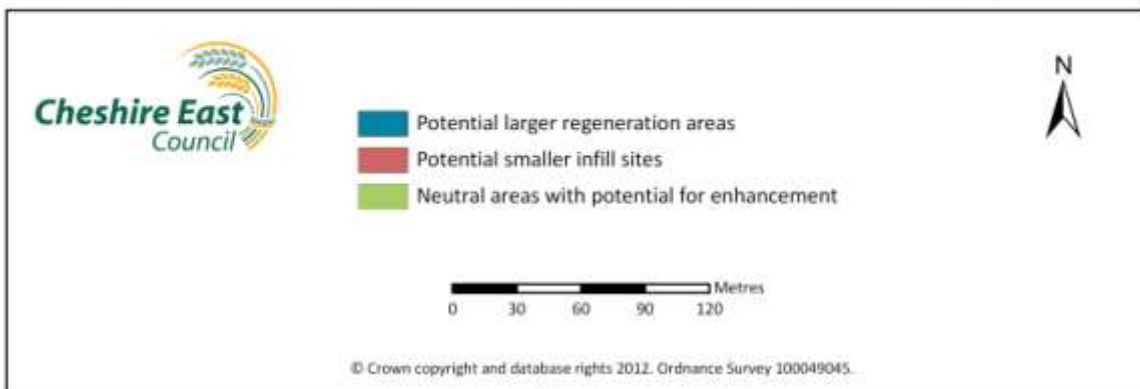
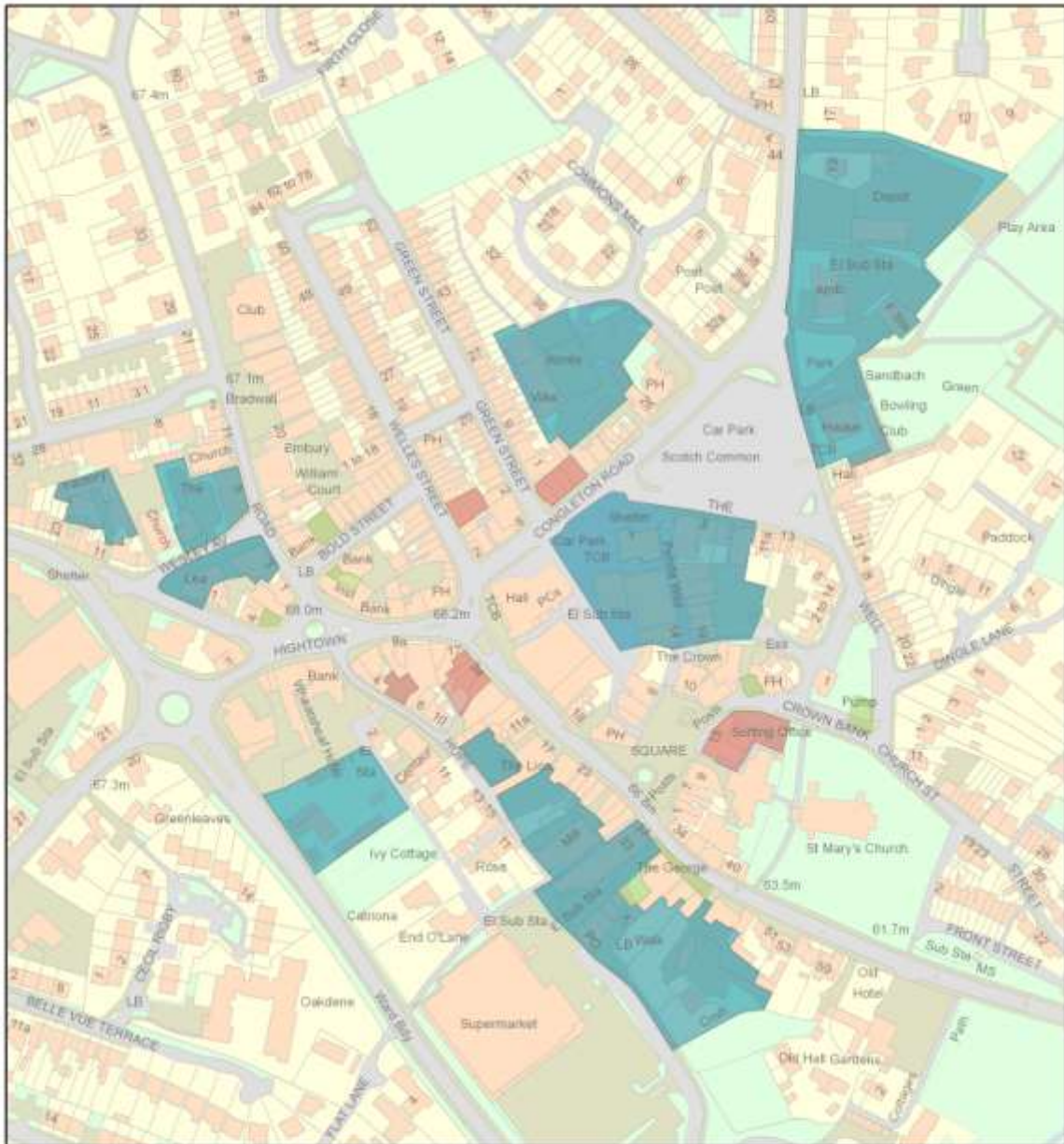


Place shaping opportunity sites

In addition to these sites, several individual detractor buildings/sites could, in the long term, offer opportunities for smaller scale 'repair' of the historic fabric within or adjacent to the conservation area. These are:

- Boots and Nationwide, High Street
- Row of 4 modern shops, Congleton Road
- 1 Welles Street

- Ladbrookes/Post Office, Market Square
- Small infill site between 4 and 6 Hope Street



Map 10: Place shaping and enhancement opportunities

The impact of the night time economy

Aspects of the current night time economy are detrimental to the image of the town centre and the conservation area. A more diverse evening offer would bring more people into the area, deterring antisocial activity. Central to this is the need to encourage outdoor dining opportunities to foster positive activity and to enhance the atmosphere of the parts of the conservation area, particularly around the Cobbles.

5 Community Involvement

There is a strong interest in conservation issues in Sandbach. The Sandbach Conservation and Heritage Group were instrumental in lobbying for the character appraisal to be undertaken. Various community groups and individuals have been involved in the preparation of the Town Plan, produced by the community, and the Town Strategy produced in conjunction with the community by Cheshire East Council. Within both, the issue of the conservation area and heritage more generally were seen as a priority, as was managing the quality of new development.

This draft character appraisal and management strategy has been produced working in partnership with the Sandbach Conservation and Heritage Group and in close liaison with Sandbach Town Council. It has also involved discussion within Cheshire East Council and with stakeholders such as English Heritage.

The Council genuinely want to involve the community in this process and therefore a consultation programme has been devised, commensurate with the scale of the project. This will entail a public meeting, an exhibition and surgeries at the library (with the exhibition remaining there for a period of at least 4 weeks), information being available on a website and the ability to feedback to the team electronically and by hard copy. Details of the feedback and the consequent proposed changes will be set out in the final version of the appraisal and management plan.

6 Suggested boundary amendments

Proposed boundary changes are set out in the Management proposals in part 2 of this document. A detailed survey has been undertaken including previously unrecognised buildings and areas of the town centre to identify whether there is a need to widen the boundary to include further areas to ensure protection via additional controls and consideration afforded by their designation as part of a conservation area. The areas that have been assessed for inclusion with summary explanation of the evaluation of each are set out in Appendix 2. The following plan sets out the proposed revised conservation area boundary.



Map 11: Suggested boundary amendments

7 Local generic guidance

Existing guidance is available in terms of what designation means and design criteria both nationally and in terms of supporting information to existing local policy. The additional controls and implications of designation under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for properties and areas designated as a conservation area are set out in Appendix 3.

Many of the properties within the conservation area have been subject to some degree of inappropriate change or repair. Consequently some general guidance relating to heritage sensitive building repairs and replacement features such as doors and windows, rainwater goods, etc. would be beneficial, as would guidance on shop fronts and advertising and energy efficiency.

8 Summary of issues

The following outline the key negative issues arising from this character appraisal.

- Poor quality public realm in parts of the conservation area, arising from the condition and type of paving, surfacing and street furniture
- Loss of historic street surfaces and overlaying of historic surfacing with tarmac. Some areas of historic surfacing are in need of repair/reinstatement
- A lack of clearly defined public space associated with key civic buildings
- Public and semi public spaces that are underutilised and/or dominated by car parking that give a negative impression of place
- Several potential development sites that are in a poor condition giving the impression that the area is in decline
- Alleys and pedestrian routes that are unwelcoming for pedestrians, used by businesses for servicing and which encourage antisocial activity, particularly at night
- Intrusive and inappropriate twentieth century development that is out of character with the historic fabric of the conservation area, harming its heritage significance
- Intrusive and inappropriate shop fronts and signage in parts of the conservation area
- Substantial erosion of historic interest in the residential parts of Green Street/Welles Street arising from replacement doors and windows and installation of satellite dishes
- Creeping erosion of character in other residential parts of the conservation area such as Church Street and Hope Street
- Views into, out of and within the conservation area undermined by the highway design and engineered character of streets, pavements and other highway features
- Car parking areas dominating parts of the conservation area and its edges
- Traffic congestion in the Hightown area preventing pedestrian movement and adversely affecting the enjoyment and character of the conservation area
- Vacant or underused properties, some in poor condition
- Lack of awareness amongst residents and property and business owners of what it means to live or own or manage a property in the conservation area
- Incidents of low level heritage crime, such as vandalism and graffiti on listed buildings
- Incidents of unauthorised development that adversely affect the character of the conservation area

Part 2 MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS



Part 1, the Character Appraisal, has provided the evidence base for developing management proposals for the Conservation Area. The following section identifies and explains the proposals for the management of the area, summarised as a management plan at the end of the document.

This management framework for the conservation area aims to provide a sustainable strategy for protecting and enhancing it long into the future. It has been purposely designed to be forward thinking, beyond the recommended timeframe for review, seeking to embed ideas for more long term enhancement alongside more immediate actions.

The management plan is also designed as a community focused, partnership action plan. This reflects the emphasis on Localism and the changing roles of community organisations and agencies, with a stronger focus on 'bottom up' delivery, where the town and its community play more of a leading role, led by the Town Council, enabled and assisted by Cheshire East Council.

As part of the community consultation, participants will be asked to identify their top 5 actions from the Management Plan to help prioritise and create an initial focus for the first couple of years. This will enable some 'quick wins', and provide time for building capacity at the local level in addition to assembling resources and partnerships to deliver more of the actions

Management Proposals

1 Boundary Amendments

Best practice guidance by English Heritage and the NPPF states that boundaries of existing conservation areas should be kept under review. Parts or areas that no longer make a positive contribution to the area's special interest should be excluded and the NPPF stresses the need for areas to be worthy of designation.

In re-assessing the extent of the Conservation Area, consideration has been given to the relative tightness of the existing boundary to the historic townscape and whether relaxation is required to include areas that also influence the area's setting. Upon assessment, the majority of the areas initially screened have been discounted for inclusion. Details of all of the areas where the boundary has been re-assessed and the results of the assessment are provided in Appendix 2 to this document.

Proposal 1

The boundary of the conservation area be amended as shown on the proposals plan to include areas as follows:-

Inclusion

- Middlewich Road (45 – 67, including Foden terrace and Drill Hall)
- South side Wesley Avenue/4-12 Bradwell Road/Old Middlewich Road
- 9-15 The Commons
- Part of curtilage of Dingle Farmhouse (north east of Farmhouse and barn)

Exclusion

The area of Green Street and Welles Street as indicated on the proposals plan

In addition to the areas to be included, one area of exclusion is proposed. This is a potentially contentious recommendation, as removing areas from the conservation area can be emotive. However, as described in the character appraisal, this part of the conservation area has suffered badly from incremental erosion since its designation in 1995.

An article 4 direction was not imposed at the time of designation and, so, over the last 25 years, many of the original features of properties such as windows and doors have been unsympathetically replaced, mainly in uPVC. Further erosion has occurred as a consequence of the erection of satellite antennae on some front elevations. Cumulatively this has led to significant erosion of character.

Certain individual properties have been maintained in a manner sensitive to the conservation area. The efforts of the owners to do so should be commended. It is unfortunate that those efforts have not been adopted more widely. This has led to widespread erosion of the character of the conservation area. If those efforts had been maintained across this part of the Conservation Area there would be no reason to consider removing this area from the conservation area.

It is proposed to maintain part of the Green Street/Welles Street area within the conservation area. This area is mixed residential and commercial and offers more scope to manage and improve the quality of that area, working proactively with businesses and property owners.



Green Street/Welles Street – significant erosion of character but commercial elements offer more scope to enhance



Plan 12: Proposals Plan

2 Areas with potential to influence the setting of the Conservation Area

As part of the assessment of the boundary, it was considered inappropriate to extend the conservation area boundary to include areas to safeguard its setting. However, it is an issue that should be highlighted in the management plan. Whilst the town centre is relatively well contained and not highly visible in long views, sites and areas immediately on the periphery do have the capacity to influence perception and appreciation of the conservation area and it is important that this is taken into account in managing change around the edges of the Conservation Area.

Consequently, for those areas that haven't been included, in order to highlight and safeguard the setting of the conservation area, it is proposed that 'areas of sensitivity' be identified around the edge of the conservation area that has the potential to influence its setting. These are also indicated on the proposals plan opposite.

Proposal 2

Proposals for development on the edges of, and in proximity to, the conservation area shall have full regard to the setting of the Conservation Area and key heritage assets within it. This zone of sensitivity is indicated on the proposals plan.

3 Other Management Proposals (summarised in the Management Plan at the end of this document)

These management proposals have been divided into 3 themes or groupings. These are:-

- Active heritage management
- Design/quality management
- Implementation projects

The purpose of this approach is to organise and link management proposals into particular categories. This approach to grouping makes the management plan clearer, allowing specific projects to be more easily identified. It also helps to distinguish between issues of general management within the conservation area, quality management in terms of development and change in the area arising from specific enhancement projects.

In addition to the policies affecting the Conservation Area, as part of the management plan, a series of other recommended actions have been identified which overlap and intertwine with the conservation area and its management, but, which are essentially wider in scope or influence than the conservation area itself.

Theme 1 Active heritage management

It is important to maintain the integrity of the fabric of the conservation area, to prevent further erosion and to secure enhancement of the character and appearance of the area. It is proposed that this be achieved through a number of approaches.

Article 4(2) direction

Certain alterations and works to properties do not require planning permission or, already benefit from what are termed 'permitted development rights' (this enables the owners to undertake those works without seeking planning permission). As has happened in Green Street and Welles Street, this freedom to alter the appearance and integrity of buildings and associated structures can result in a significant adverse impact upon the conservation area, by incrementally eroding its character and

undermining its heritage value. The effects of such erosion are beginning to show in other parts of the Conservation Area.

To prevent further erosion of character, particularly in relation to the parts of the conservation area in residential use, it is proposed that an article 4 direction be served, targeted to frontages adjacent to streets, pedestrian pathways and open spaces, or where visible from the public domain.

An article 4 direction is a legal notice prepared by the Council requiring that planning permission be obtained to undertake such changes. It does not mean that works cannot be undertaken, but it does allow the council to assess and influence the appearance of those changes. Doing the alterations without planning permission could then result in the Council taking enforcement action, if the work is inappropriate.

Proposal 3

An Article 4 direction be served in relation to the residential properties in the conservation area, removing permitted development rights to modify the exterior of dwellings facing roads, pedestrian routes and open spaces, or where otherwise visible from public vantage points



Erosion of character in Greene Street

Promoting the conservation area

It is important to ensure that residents and businesses/property owners in the conservation area are aware of its status, the revisions to the boundary, the restrictions and good management practices. This will ensure that users of the area will be better informed about how collectively its character can be maintained or enhanced.

Proposal 4

After designation of the Article 4 Direction, promotional material be produced and distributed to residents and businesses within and on the periphery of the conservation area

Assets at risk

As part of the character appraisal, a number of properties have been highlighted as being at risk, either because of their condition or the building not being in use (or both). Some are listed buildings, others unlisted. As part of managing the fabric of the area, identifying fabric at risk can enable resources to be targeted toward repair/securing re-use, as part of a wider enhancement or heritage led regeneration strategy. Buildings identified and requiring further assessment include:

Building/structure	Reason for being considered at risk
22 Front Street	Recent unauthorised works and condition of building a concern. Building highly prominent and frequently photographed
Black Bear	Grade II* listed building at the heart of the conservation area. Aspects of condition of fabric cause for concern and has been subject to low level heritage crime (vandalism, graffiti when not trading). Recent approval for repairs and adaptation
The George	Prominent grade II listed building, presently unoccupied and could be vulnerable to heritage crime incidents while unoccupied. Recent approval for extension and enhancement
Dingle Farmhouse and barn	Unoccupied timber framed listed building/ brick Shippon. Located on edge of Conservation Area, therefore vulnerable to heritage crime incidents.
The Hollies, Wesley Avenue	Vacant unlisted building with local heritage significance. Part of a larger development site. Location makes the building vulnerable to heritage crime incidents

Proposal 5

A list of assets at risk be compiled, outlining the building/structure's condition including a dated photographic survey

Enforcement

As part of a co-ordinated approach to heritage management it is important to respond effectively to unauthorised works undertaken in the conservation area. It will also be important that the Sandbach community takes an active part in this process, to advise the Council of any works undertaken that are not permitted, particularly given the level of resources available to the council to actively monitor the conservation area.

Where unauthorised works are undertaken, a speedy, effective approach should be adopted to investigate and then action enforcement cases, both to demonstrate the importance of the designation as a conservation area and to prevent the cumulative erosion of character that has taken place in certain areas.

Proposal 6

Undertake a detailed assessment of unauthorised works within the conservation area, potentially working with the Town Council. Investigate and action cases as deemed appropriate by the enforcement and legal sections of the Council.

Tackling heritage crime

Heritage crime is any criminal activity that either directly or indirectly affects a heritage asset and which deprives current and future generations from enjoying that asset. Heritage crime includes a range of types of incident ranging from extremely serious and potentially catastrophic crimes such as metal theft and arson to lesser incidents such as antisocial behaviour, including graffiti. Unauthorised works to listed buildings and works of demolition in conservation areas are also considered to be heritage crime.

Recent national research has highlighted the full extent of heritage crime and the profile of heritage crime has risen significantly over the last year or so and Cheshire is at the forefront of the response to heritage crime. Cheshire East Council is presently shaping its approach to integrate with the Heritage Watch community policing initiative.

The town should respond positively to tackling heritage crime within the conservation area and there is a leading role for the Town Council, the Sandbach Heritage Group and a town network of other community groups to act as the 'eyes and ears' and to be wardens for the built heritage of the town.

Things that could be done as part of the wider Cheshire East Council approach are:

- Prepare a comprehensive list of heritage assets of value to the town (led by the Town Council)
- Individual risk assessments for heritage assets deemed to be most vulnerable with an overall assessment for other assets (working with the Local authority and other agencies)
- Establish a network of heritage crime wardens to keep an eye on heritage assets (working with the Town and Borough Council's and including training)
- Ensure the process for reporting and actioning heritage crime is clearly understood by everyone involved with the town and there is a clear '*chain of action*'
- Community awareness raising to deter heritage crime as part of Heritage Watch

Proposal 7

As part of Cheshire East's heritage crime programme, develop a community based approach for Sandbach, focused on the conservation area and heritage assets. The approach should involve Town Council, CEC, Cheshire Police and community groups.

Highways/Streetscape

Aside from the cobbled square, extensive areas of historic streetscape exist within the conservation area. This is mainly concentrated in the Crown and Well Bank area, the western end of Church Street and the southern part of High Street but there are also some remnants in Hope Street. These cobbled surfaces, often with slim Sandstone kerbs, are the most distinctive element of Sandbach's streetscape character and need to be retained and protected as part of future highway and utility work. Liaison with the highway and streetscape teams and with utility companies is therefore essential to ensure they are aware of the heritage sensitivity of these materials

It is also possible that other areas of historic surface exist under roads and pavements. When highway works are proposed, then the potential of revealing and reinstating historic surfaces should be assessed.

Proposal 8

Future highway and streetscape works in areas of traditional surfacing should ensure appropriate reinstatement of those materials. In other areas, where historic surfaces have been overlaid but remain intact, where practicable, historic surfaces should be reinstated.

Theme 2 Design/quality management

One of the main issues highlighted in the community consultation associated with the Town Plan and Town Strategy was the erosion of character deriving from inappropriate changes to shop fronts and associated signage and a concern about the quality of new development taking place in the conservation area.

This section of the management plan sets out proposals to better manage the quality of ongoing change affecting the commercial areas and for development proposals either within or on the edge of the conservation area.

Shop front and signage design guidance

The commercial centre of Sandbach forms a large part of the conservation area. Over the lifetime of the conservation area there has been an ongoing erosion of its character arising from changes to the frontages of buildings and inappropriate signage. This has weakened the conservation area in terms of its appearance and historic interest and is especially evident in parts of High Street and High Town. Whilst its impact is by no means universal, it is quite widespread and will continue to worsen if left unchecked.

In conjunction with the suggested frontage improvement scheme set out later in this plan, it is proposed that more strenuous controls and quality standards should be put in place within the conservation area. This will ensure that future proposals for shop fronts and signage will, as a matter of course, require a higher standard of design and appropriateness to the conservation area in order to be acceptable.

A more detailed shop front design guide is intended, however to begin this process of design improvement, a set of interim design principles have been identified to inform shop front design and its assessment. This is supplemented by guidance set out in Appendix 4 of this document.

Ultimately, the intention is to foster a mindset amongst the community and property owners/businesses that 'quality matters', and that the starting point for any proposed alteration to a shop front or new signage is to achieve high quality design that will help reinforce the historic interest and character of the town centre.

The following checklist, in conjunction with design guidance at Appendix 4 should be used to both design and assess changes to shop fronts and signage in the conservation area.

Proposal 9

External works to shops and commercial buildings in the conservation area shall be assessed in accordance with the key principles outlined in the design guidance in Appendix 4 below and more detailed guidance on shop fronts and signage once that becomes available. These design principles apply to alterations to existing and new shop fronts and signage in the Conservation Area.

Proposals that do not adequately address these requirements, assessed using the checklist below shall be considered unacceptable in terms of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).



A recent example of traditional shop front design, Welles Street

Key shop front and signage design principles checklist

Principle	Explanation	Assessment
CONTEXT		
1 understand the wider context	Ensure the wider context of the site is understood. How visible is it in the street scene? Is there a broader contextual palette of materials, architectural form /detail or colours? Is it a stand alone building or part of a grouping? and if part of a grouping, is there variety or consistency in the buildings?	Does the design fit within the wider context by:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding well to local traditions – materials, architecture, colours • If stand alone and/or highly visible, it takes the opportunity to emphasise it as a landmark building • If part of a group, responding positively to either variety or consistency (whichever is appropriate) • Provides individual shop fronts for each 'plot' (even when part of a larger joined premises) • Design informed by historic assessment
2 understand the host building	Ensure the character of the host building is understood. What period is the building? Is the building of traditional or modern design? What are the architectural rhythms/features? What are the characteristic materials and colours	Does the design fit with the building by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitting with the period and character of the host building • Adopting a suitable approach – whether modern or traditional given the building itself and its architectural design • Uses appropriate materials, colours and is of appropriate quality • Individual shop fronts for each 'plot' (even when part of the same premises) • Design informed by historic assessment

CONSERVATION

<p>3 Repair and re-use remnants of an existing traditional shop front where possible</p>	<p>It is always preferable to conserve historic fabric. Are there remnants of the original shop front? Assess the potential for it to be repaired and supplemented. Alternatively it could be used as a template to reproduce the design of the shop front, aided by other research Historic fittings such as cast vents, hanging sign fittings and other ornamental elements should be conserved</p>	<p>Does the proposal meet this requirement by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately assessing whether elements of the original shop front exist and whether it can be re-used/repared • If not repairable, the design is informed by remnants of the shop front and other historic research • Existing historic fittings are being retained within the design
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DESIGN DETAIL

<p>4 Traditionally designed shop fronts</p>	<p>Traditionally designed shop fronts should only be used on pre-modernist buildings or historic recreations. They have certain key architectural characteristics as set out in the Design Guide. It is important that these elements are incorporated and executed to a high quality and integrate with the wider character of the building.</p>	<p>Does the design incorporate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriately scaled and detailed fascia, cornice, pilasters, and capitals • An appropriately sized and detailed stall riser, constructed of appropriate materials to the building period • Shop windows of an appropriate scale and sub-division (usually with a vertical emphasis) with appropriately detailed timber frame (sill, mullions and transoms) • A chamfered recessed doorway with an appropriately designed door with fanlight and at least 50% glazing) • Detailing appropriate to building period
<p>5 Modern shop front design</p>	<p>In some instances modern shop front design will be appropriate in the Conservation Area. On modern buildings (inter war period onwards) high quality modern shop fronts should be employed. It will be important that high quality architectural design and materials are achieved. Elements of modern design can also sometimes be successfully integrated into traditional/historic buildings</p>	<p>Does the design incorporate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern interpretation of a fascia panel, cornice and pilasters in appropriate high quality materials • Glazing appropriately scaled to the character and proportions of the façade and the shop front (linear emphasis likely on some modernist buildings) • A stall riser of appropriate scale and materiality to the design (often lower on modern buildings) • Frames and doors designed and finished to suit the period and architecture of the building. • For modern design within traditional building types, the design should be informed and respond to the architecture of the building

6 Signage	Signage has a significant bearing on character and its cumulative impact can undermine the appearance of streets, as well as individual buildings. In general terms signs should be of appropriate materials, size, location and illumination (if applicable). Internally illuminated box fascia and projecting signs are unacceptable in the Conservation Area and on Listed Buildings	Does the signage achieve the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit within an appropriate fascia zone (on the fascia panel) • Fascia signage is of either timber or another appropriate material • Lettering is hand painted, engraved, fixed or individually mounted projecting and of an appropriate material • Lighting is either front lit via architectural spot or concealed trough lighting or individual letter backlighting (halo lighting) • It does not comprise illuminated box signage • projecting signage should sit below first floor sill level and not obscure architectural features. On traditional properties they should be bracket hung (ornate brackets). On modern shop fronts they should integrate with the fascia or be omitted • Corporate signage should be tailored to the character of the building/area
7 Materials/colour	Materials and colour can have a great bearing on the success and quality of a shop front or shopping street, particularly in a conservation area. Colour needs to be managed to ensure that the character of the wider area is not eroded by choices of individual businesses. Garish and bright colours usually avoided in favour of a more muted palette. Businesses expected to modify colour schemes to meet conservation objectives	Does the materiality/colour scheme achieve the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On traditional shop fronts, materials generally painted softwood, glass and brick or render (stall riser) • On modern shop fronts materials could also include high quality architectural metalwork, ceramics and glazing • Colour scheme that responds to the business, the building and the wider area – from the Conservation palette • ‘Corporate’ colour schemes amended to meet requirements for the building and area
8 Blinds/canopies	Historically retractable blinds were commonplace in shopping streets. More recently they have been replaced by fixed ‘Dutch blinds’. Where existing historic shop fronts include their retractable blinds (or housing) then these should be conserved/reinstated. Canopies need to be at least 2.1m from the ground and not encroach into the highway. The colour of blinds also needs to be managed	Does the design incorporate or consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of blinds or equipment for potential reinstatement • If a traditional shop front design is proposed, has a retractable canopy been considered? • If proposed, is the canopy in an appropriately coloured canvas, with appropriately designed fittings? • Is it the correct height above pavement level and not encroaching into the street? • If of a modern design, is the canopy architecturally appropriate and of high quality, integral to the overall design of the shop front

9 security shutters

Requirements for shop security are important but it can present an issue for conservation areas and heritage buildings. Before proposing shutters, other security measures should be fully explored. Shutters should be seen as a last resort. Only internal transparent designs with concealed housings will be viewed favourably. Alternatively external removable decorative grilles could be used. External shutters would only be accepted in very exceptional circumstances and where only lattice designs are proposed.

Does the proposal meet the requirements by:

- A comprehensive security assessment has been undertaken
- Have removable decorative grilles been considered (and are they appropriate)?
- If shutters are proposed are they internal and of a transparent/lattice design
- If external shutters are proposed, have all other options been explored?
- If external shutters, are they a transparent/lattice design and subdivided (rather than a single span shutter)
- The shutter housing is designed into the fascia or internally
- Other security measures (cameras and alarm boxes) have been discretely located as part of the overall design



Standard corporate signage in the conservation area



A traditional shop front in the Conservation area



A discordant mix of frontages in the conservation area



Harmonious character of frontages – Market Square

Future controls over advertising

Even in conservation areas, certain types of advertising benefit from 'deemed consent', meaning the owner/business does not have to make an application for its approval. To ensure more wide ranging controls over advertising, it is suggested that further consideration be given to the use of discontinuance powers in certain cases (this would need to be carefully considered) and also potentially designating an area of special advertisement control within the conservation area. This would require consideration in close discussion with traders, the Town Council and the Sandbach Partnership, having regard to wider commercial and economic conditions, the availability of grant assistance etc. and as part of a co-ordinate heritage led regeneration approach for the town centre.

Proposal 10

In discussion with the Town Council and other partners, consider the use of discontinuance powers for existing poor advertising benefiting from deemed consent, and the potential for designating an area of special advertisement control within the commercial areas of the conservation area.



An example of inappropriate corporate signage

Enhancing design quality in the planning process

It is important to the future integrity of the conservation area that design quality for new development is of a high standard and complimentary to it and its individual heritage buildings. To achieve this, it is proposed that concise development briefs be prepared for development and opportunity sites, setting out the design parameters for the development, having regard to the wider urban design context and conservation area management considerations. Key issues that need to be taken into account in briefs and development management decisions are:

Character: ensure that the character of development responds to the character of the part of the town centre in which the site is located. Focal and landmark building opportunities should be fully exploited, drawing on characteristics of the wider town centre and the character area within which the site is located.

Grain/scale/height: ensure that the development responds successfully to the established scale of its surroundings, including traditional plot patterns, prevailing heights and other scale considerations. Roof scapes should respond to the character of the surrounding area. Key views should be taken into account to ensure these are protected and reinforced

Frontages and uses: Respond to the character of the site and its context and ensure positive and active frontage to streets, routes and spaces. Where appropriate secure mixed uses, with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential above.

Architecture/materials: High quality innovative design solutions should be encouraged, but they must be informed by context. Solutions that do not have regard for their wider impact upon the conservation area, and which detract from its character should be opposed. Modern materials that are in keeping with the Conservation Area should be encouraged alongside traditional materials. Contemporary architectural solutions should be of an exceptionally high standard, with strong attention to detail. The materials palette should be informed by the character of the part of the town in which they are located. More traditional designs must demonstrate attention to detail and employ local traditions and materials to recreate historic characteristics. Inferior, pastiche design proposals will not be supported.



Recent housing development in Church Street that responds successfully to the character of the area

Access: Sites shall be conveniently accessed with positive pedestrian access from the street. Entrances should be conveniently located, visible and designed to accommodate impaired mobility. Vehicular access and parking should be discretely located and should not disrupt street scenes or the continuity of frontages. Open areas of parking should be positively landscaped, in keeping with the character of the area.

Sustainable design: new development should seek to be as sustainable as possible to reduce its current and future environmental impact. This can be achieved through positive site planning, high levels of building performance to reduce carbon outputs and consumption of energy and water, incorporating mixed uses, utilising renewable or low carbon energy (where appropriate) and the sourcing of materials and building practices. Adaptation to climate change is also essential, so this should be built into the design of schemes.

Public realm: new development should contribute toward improving the public realm of the conservation area, particularly where open space is constrained or not being provided as part of the development. Where public realm is to be provided, this should be of a high quality, and of a positive character in the context of the conservation area. Contextual materials should be employed to help reinforce sense of place. The philosophy toward soft landscape should be informed by the character area in which the site is located.

The Local Planning authority and consultees, such as the Town Council, should expect high standards of design in new development and should challenge developers and their design teams to elevate design quality in the town. Where poor design is proposed that does not preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area then it should be opposed.

Proposal 11

High quality design shall be secured within the conservation area. This will be achieved through the drafting of design briefs for potential development and opportunity sites and in the Development Management process. Applications that do not demonstrate high design quality will be considered not to comply with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), specifically paragraphs 56 and 64

Protection/enhancement of historic street pattern/views/assets

The town centre retains its medieval street pattern and alleyways that predate the industrialisation of the town. It is important to the historic character of the town that this pattern is not overlaid or removed by new development or eroded by piecemeal change. Where the historic street pattern has been adversely affected by previous development, new proposals should seek to reinstate historic street character and remedy any adverse impacts. This is particularly important in the context of the historic lanes, many of which are presently poor routes for pedestrians, especially during darkness.

Key views within the conservation area and into and out of the area should be protected. New development should seek to respond to the opportunities presented by existing views and should also seek to enhance them where the opportunity arises (for example, by reinforcing and channelling an important view).

Proposal 12

Historic street patterns and views within, into and out of the conservation area should be protected from the adverse affects of new development. Proposals that lead to harm or loss of the historic street pattern or important views shall be resisted

As part of enhancing the conservation area, it is proposed that a public realm strategy be developed for the conservation area, but ideally for the town centre as a whole. A public realm strategy would provide an informed plan for the enhancement of public spaces, streets, lanes and pedestrian routes

within the town centre. A good public realm strategy would build upon the existing public realm characteristics of the conservation area, using this to develop a vision and strategy for public realm enhancement and to inform future management of streets and spaces. This would include principles relating to paving, street furniture, lighting, signage and maintenance.

Proposal 13

A public realm strategy should be developed for the conservation area, ideally as part of a broader strategy for the town centre.

Theme 3: Projects

High Street/Hightown public realm enhancement scheme

Building on the public realm strategy for the town centre, it is proposed that the High Street and Hightown areas would be subject to public realm transformation as part of a co-ordinated project for regenerating the town centre. It is likely that this would be undertaken in more than one phase.

Phase 1 - High Street between the Cobbles and the Town Hall (because of its condition, the impact it would have on perception of the town centre and it being reasonably straight forward to deliver subject to resources and funding).

Phase 2 – High Town and Old Middlewich Road. This phase would be more extensive, costly and would require review of vehicle and pedestrian movement and therefore is more difficult to deliver. Consequently it would be a longer term project

Phase 3 – Southern end of High Street. If resources are available then this would be the final phase of public realm works in the High Street area. Given the present character of this section of High Street it is less critical to the area's character, although some short term holding maintenance is recommended.

Proposal 14

Phased public realm refurbishment should be undertaken in High Street and High Town as part of a co-ordinated regeneration strategy for the town centre.



Illustrations showing the potential enhancement of High Street

Shop front/building frontage improvement scheme

Alongside public realm refurbishment, it is proposed that a shop front improvement scheme be established in the Conservation Area, focused upon the High Street/High Town area within the community. This would entail promoting refurbishment of frontages and a heritage led approach within the conservation area. The project would be a grant scheme, filling the 'heritage deficit' for conservation led enhancements. Grant aided shop front schemes would need to demonstrate that they have met the design requirements set out in this management plan and any future detailed design guidance in order to benefit.

Proposal 15

A shop front improvement scheme should be implemented in the town centre, focused on High Street/Hightown, in conjunction with the associated public realm refurbishment programme.

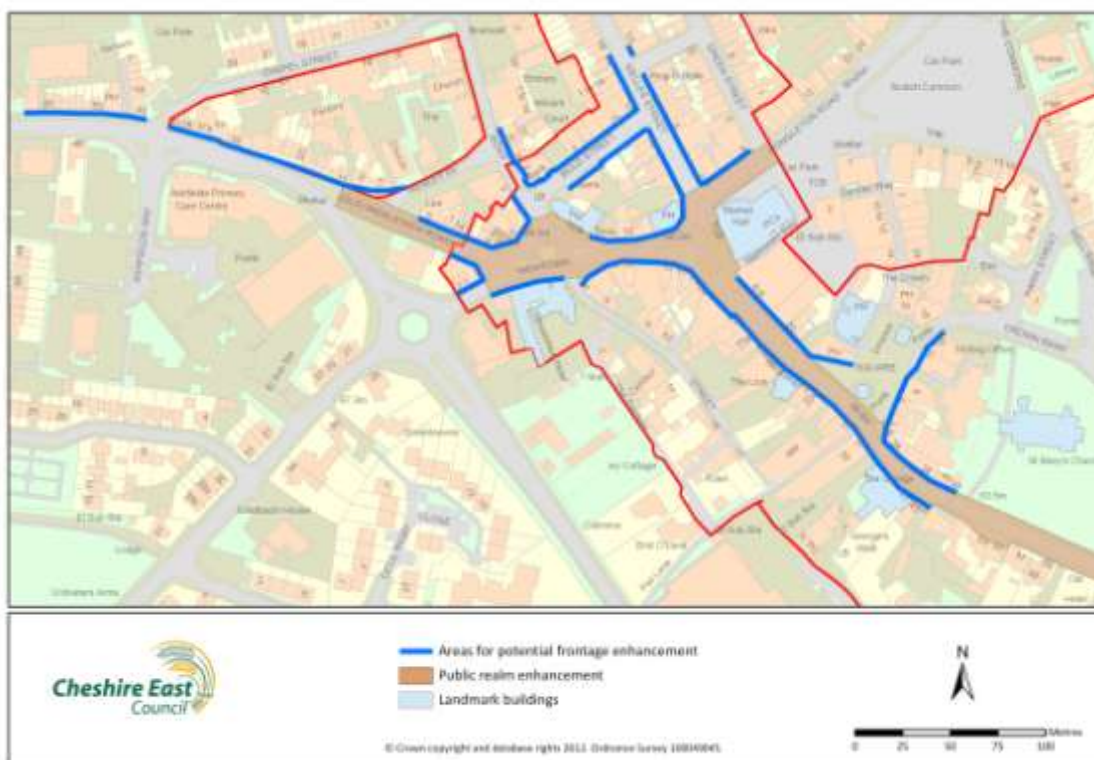
Landmark buildings project

Several landmark/focal buildings which are in commercial or civic use are located at key locations within the conservation area. These 'landmarks' offer the opportunity to become centrepieces within a wider strategy for the conservation area, set within the public realm and wider frontage enhancement proposed by the Management Plan for the High Street/Hightown area.

Enhancements would take the form of fabric refurbishment, facilitating alternative or more diverse usage and creating night time interest via sensitive accent lighting. This would be achieved through negotiation with owners but also through grant assistance/public investment, subject to funding.

Proposal 16

A landmark buildings project be developed for key civic and commercial buildings in the conservation area comprising fabric refurbishment, works to enable viable re-use and accent lighting



Map 13 Suggested public realm and frontage improvements

Heritage interpretation project

As part of promoting the conservation area, it is proposed that heritage trails and interpretation be implemented within the town. These could be based upon different themes, taking people to different parts of the conservation area. The interpretation material could include traditional methods such as heritage plaques, trail markers and signage and interpretation boards. In addition, it could entail using modern interpretation methods, taking advantage of smart phone and other technologies.

This should be developed as a local community project with the Sandbach Conservation and Heritage Group, utilising its local knowledge to develop the trails etc. and working with local schools but also information technology skills and knowledge, ideally already available within the local community.

Proposal 17

A heritage interpretation project be developed for the town, to boost its attractiveness to heritage tourists and for the benefit of the local community.

Hope Street and Warm Walls enhancements

The Hope Street Project sought to revitalise this historic area through public realm and artistic interventions, to transform what has become a neglected secondary route within the town. Unfortunately the project has stalled in recent years and therefore it is an opportune time, during the life of this management Plan to review and revitalise the proposals for Hope Street.

Several small sites, to the rear of High Street, offer the opportunity to better link it with Hope Street and to create secondary frontage and uses that will help deliver enhancement of the Hope Street area.

Warm Walls is an historic lane leading from the market square to the rear of High Street but it runs along the edge of a servicing area between High Street and Sanbec Way. This area has been the subject of enhancement works in the past, but it feels neglected, lacks surveillance and is potentially unsafe at night. In the longer term, the re-development of the Sanbec Way retail area will provide a long term solution to the Warm Walls area.

Proposal 18

Enhancement projects should be developed for the Lanes including Hope Street and Warm Wall areas comprising improvements to public realm, lighting and potentially small scale, infill development

Gateway enhancements

The pedestrian and vehicular gateways into the conservation area require enhancement, including the lanes/alleyways leading into the heart of the town. This will improve access into the conservation area, particularly for users on foot and cycle. Improvement of vehicular gateways will help to create a more positive impression of the conservation area and make it more legible for both visitors and residents.



Map 14: Suggested gateway and lane enhancements

Proposal 19

Enhancements to pedestrian and vehicular gateways should be undertaken to improve accessibility on foot/by cycle and car and to create better impressions of the town centre and conservation area

Detractor site/area project

Several detractor sites have been identified in the appraisal process. These sites adversely impact upon the character of the conservation area. Some are potential long term regeneration opportunity sites, whilst others are modest in scale and have a localised impact upon the heritage significance of the part of the conservation area in which they are located.

Potential longer term regeneration sites

- Back land sites off Hope Street – improved fencing, re-surfacing, de-weeding etc., open up for temporary use such as micro allotments?
- Area around Town Mill – tidying of yard area, encouraging positive uses, cleaning of graffiti, create potential link into Hope Street?
- Georges Walk retail parade – repairs to paving, tidying of boundaries, screening of rear access to retail units, improvements to the rear of the George, lighting

Smaller sites

- Area to rear of Town Hall/Market Hall (part of Little Common) as part of refurbishment of Market Hall – remove parking, landscaping and surfacing, external uses associated with re-use of the Market Hall
- Small Area of space off Hightown/Old Middlewich Road next to Ice cream parlour/coffee shop
- Triangular piece of land at end of Old Middlewich Road – landscape public realm improvements as part of an improved pedestrian gateway into the Conservation Area
- Area around the well at Crown Bank/Well Bank – light touch enhancements to surrounding landscape, paving and parking areas in proximity to the well site.

Proposal 20

A programme of enhancements to detractor sites and empty shops be developed, some temporary awaiting longer term regeneration, others permanent to transform the appearance and use of areas of public space

Protection/enhancement of green spaces

Green spaces and mature trees are an important characteristic of the southern part of the conservation area. Their management and a long term strategy for their replacement/succession will be important to maintain the future character of the conservation area. The trees located within the churchyard and the southern end of High Street are especially important and should be appropriately managed.

Where tree planting opportunities exist, native trees of an appropriate species should be planted to help reinforce the established green character. In the northern part of the conservation area, tree planting should be carefully thought through, having regard to the harder townscape character of the area.

Proposal 21

Established areas of tree coverage and landscape should be maintained and enhanced, whilst opportunities to plant further trees in the southern part of the conservation area should be considered. Tree planting in the harder townscape of the northern conservation area should be encouraged where it contributes positively to the townscape



Other recommended actions

Whilst not part of the management plan, it is suggested that the following actions also be considered as part of the longer term regeneration of the town centre. These are briefly described with an explanation as to why they are important to the conservation area and the heritage of the town.

- Movement study (broader movement study for the town centre)
- Town centre accessibility improvements
- Urban design framework for town centre
- Public realm strategy for whole town centre
- Secure planning obligations/CIL toward town centre improvements
- Enhancements to Scotch Common and linkages to the park
- Congleton Road gateway project
- Living above the shop project
- Promote cable and other below ground ICT
- Protection/enhancement of Brook and other green corridors/areas on the periphery of town centre

Movement study – The impacts of traffic and parking have been identified in the appraisal as key influences upon the character and appearance of parts of the conservation area. Vehicles are an inevitable element of the town centre but there are ways in which the impacts could be more positively managed and indeed the flow of vehicles made more efficient, reducing congestion, pollution and creating a more attractive town centre environment for pedestrians (particularly in the High Town and Congleton Road areas). The proposed urban design framework and public realm strategies, discussed below, would in part rely on the outcome of the movement study to help shape proposals.

Accessibility improvements – One of the anticipated outcomes of the movement study would be to improve accessibility for pedestrians, including the improvement of gateways for pedestrian accessibility, the improvement of alleyways and pedestrian pathways and the improvement of key spaces, particularly within the core area of the town centre.

Urban design framework – The town centre has some major issues that need addressing, some within the conservation area, but also others on its periphery. These issues and the need for an overarching regeneration strategy for the town centre necessitate that urban design should underpin this approach, to create a framework upon which the regeneration can be delivered.

Public realm strategy – As mentioned for the conservation area itself, a public realm strategy should be developed as part of the regeneration approach for the town centre. The area's public realm is vitally important to the town's future but also to reinforce its local distinctiveness. More attractive streets and spaces, building upon the work undertaken to the Cobbles in 2009, will create a new dynamic for the town, building on its essential qualities, and ensuring that future works to the public realm strengthen its townscape qualities.

Secure funding for town centre improvement – The area is facing unprecedented change, both from new development but also the changing role of town centres in the 21st century. It will be ever more important that the town centre has a high environmental quality. In order to maintain a genuinely sustainable community, the town centre needs to offer a wide range of amenities set within a high quality setting. New development on the fringes of the town centre and those in more outlying locations should equally contribute toward creating this vibrant and attractive heart. The vehicle for securing this would be via Section 106 and eventually Community Infrastructure Levy. This requirement should be set out in Local Plan policy and any accompanying Supplementary Planning Documents.

Enhancement to Scotch Common and links to the park – The Park is hidden and disconnected from the conservation area. It is a significant asset for the town but one that is not fully capitalised upon. Scotch Common, once the town's key green space and the location of its markets, fairs and one of its key historic events, the Civil War skirmish, is now primarily a car park. Whilst this serves a valuable purpose for the town, it also contributes to the town's car dominated character. Scotch Common, in its present form, severs the Park from the conservation area.

There are legal limitations on use of the Commons, but there may be scope to create a more positive connection, linking the conservation area and the park and also helping to improve the appearance of Scotch Common. This landscape led project would help to transform this approach to the conservation area, access to the park and potentially a more attractive location for activities and events.

Congleton Road gateway – Linked to the above, there is a significant opportunity to consider the development potential of the library, ambulance and fire station and the vacant development sites at this gateway entrance to the town centre. This area is presently underutilised and creates quite a poor impression on one of the main entrances into the town from the M6.

Living above the shop – Although there is no accurate survey, it is likely that a number of town centre premises are not fully utilising first floor accommodation. Some of this upper floor space could be used to create more residential accommodation in the town centre, potentially generating value or encouraging investment in the fabric of buildings.

Protection/enhancement of the Brook corridor and other green areas - The green southern edge to the conservation area alongside the Brook and Dingle Lake is a key element in defining the edge of the conservation area and establishing the essential character of Sandbach.

Whilst these areas are unlikely to be subject to development pressure and are largely covered by Tree Preservation Orders, this does not secure their long term management. As with the established green areas within the conservation area, it will important to the setting and character of the town that this area is maintained in the long term. Part of this management is to secure succession planting for the long term but also potentially to widen access to the lake and the Brook, as part of a leisure circuit around the town centre and linked to the Park.

Evening and night time economy – As identified in the appraisal there is an imbalance in the evening/night time offer of the town and this reduces the town's night time vitality and is potentially linked to public disorder and incidents of antisocial activity. A positive strategy to encourage a more balanced evening/night time leisure offer would benefit the town centre.



The conservation area and the wider town centre context

Monitoring

In order to be effective, it will be important to regularly monitor progress against the actions set out in the Management Plan. A monitoring framework will need to be established, co-ordinated between the various parties. To this end the Town Council will be setting up a group specifically tasked with inputting into the consultation response to the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan consultation and then with implementation and monitoring of the Management Plan once it and the Appraisal have been adopted. The group would also potentially involve Cheshire East as well as other partner organisations.

A potential way to manage this would be an annual review/assessment of progress against the Management Plan with perhaps 2 or 3 other meetings of the management group during the year. It is envisaged that the Management Plan would have a degree of flexibility inbuilt and with the capacity of the management group to interpret and modify provided the spirit of the Management Plan is maintained, without the need for formal review. It is recommended however, that a more formal review of the condition of the Conservation Area and of the delivery of Management is undertaken after 5 years to assess what impact it has had on the condition and status of the Conservation Area as being at risk.

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

short 1-5 yrs, medium 5-10 yrs, long 10+ yrs

No.	Action	Short, medium or long term	Lead body	Key partners	Notes
Theme 1: Active heritage management					
1	Serve Article 4 direction: remove rights to alter residential properties without planning permission	short	CEC	-	For residential properties within the CA boundary to restrict alterations without planning permission, including changes to windows and doors, satellite dishes, changes to boundaries
2	Promote/raise awareness of the conservation area to residents/businesses: leaflets, website etc.	short	STC	CEC	To ensure that residents and business are fully aware of the conservation area and the implications of being located within it
3	Identify local assets at risk: compile a list of buildings that are vulnerable to change or are in poor condition	short then ongoing	CEC	STC	Identify candidates and feed into relevant Borough wide lists
4	Investigate unauthorised works and assess the need for enforcement action	short then ongoing	CEC	STC	Planning enforcement investigations for issues identified during survey or brought to attention of CEC and then ongoing
5	Establish a Heritage Watch group including assessing the risk of heritage crime to heritage buildings and features and respond to incidents	short then ongoing	STC	CEC, police, local community	Promote heritage crime awareness in town – establish heritage watch group, undertake HC risk audits for key assets/areas and prompt reporting of incidents
6	Ensure that highways and streetscape works protect/reinstate areas of historic streetscape	ongoing	CEC	STC	Liaison with highways, streetscape and utilities to protect areas and features of historic streetscape and to reinstate where practicable as part of day to day management of the highway
7	Consider serving discontinuance notices and designating an area of special advertisement control to remove rights for certain adverts that normally do not require advertisement consent	short	CEC	-	Remove advertising rights for cases of inappropriate signage and ensure more forms of advertising require advertisement consent where the quality can be managed in accordance with the design guidelines
Theme 2: design/quality management					
8	Improve design quality in planning process: preparation of design guidance for key sites and ensure planning decisions take account of management plan for the conservation area	ongoing	CEC	STC	CEC: prepare development briefs on key sites and in processing applications, TC in commenting on applications
9	Ensure protection and enhancement of historic street pattern/views/assets	ongoing	CEC	STC	Ensuring development guidance reflects this objective, consideration in planning decisions
10	Prepare public realm guidelines: principles to manage and improve the quality of streets and spaces in the conservation area	short - medium	STC	CEC	Preparation of principles for street design and management within the conservation area

11	Prepare urban design framework: regeneration principles for town centre and key development sites in the conservation area	short - medium	STC	CEC	Preparation of a framework to inform regeneration within or on the edge of the conservation area
Theme 3: Projects					
12	Promote a High Street/Hightown public realm enhancement scheme (new paving, seating, street lighting etc.)	Medium - long	STC	CEC	Potentially 2 or 3 phases. Phase 1 likely to be High Street between the Cobbles and Sandbach Town Hall, with further phases in Hightown and High Street (eastern end)
13	Promote a shop front/building frontage improvement scheme (signage, shop fronts and building condition)	Short-long	STC	CEC	Long term programme for frontage improvement on key frontages as part of wider public realm uplift in conservation area, focused primarily on High Street/Hightown
14	Promote a landmark buildings project: lighting and fabric improvements to key buildings	Medium	STC	CEC	Heritage led programme for key buildings, including fabric, setting and lighting
15	Undertake heritage interpretation projects: heritage trails, local plaque scheme, website, interpretation of crosses etc.	Short-medium	SHG	STC CEC	To promote the heritage credentials of Sandbach as part of an enhanced tourist offer and to promote 'dwell time' with its economic spin offs in the town centre
16	Promote improvement to lanes/alleyways including Hope Street and Warm Walls: improvements to lighting, surveillance etc.	Medium-long	STC	CEC	Townscape enhancements to improve image/usability of key alleyways/pedestrian routes
17	Promote gateway enhancements: improvements to vehicle and pedestrian routes into and within the conservation area	Medium-long	STC	CEC	Enhancement to vehicular and pedestrian gateways into the conservation area to improve image and sense of arrival into the area
18	Promote a detractor sites/buildings project: Identify sites that are in poor condition and undertake remedial works	Short - medium	Community	STC, CEC, land owners	Improvement of condition of detractor sites through temporary interventions in advance of longer term solutions
19	Protection/enhancement of green spaces: ensure trees and landscape are well managed and secure future planting	ongoing	STC	CEC, land owners	Positive management of green spaces and promotion of an urban greening project/succession planting

STC - Sandbach Town Council, CEC – Cheshire East Council, SCHG – Sandbach Conservation and Heritage Group

NB: The actions identified above are all subject to the availability of resources and funding

OTHER RECOMMENDED ACTIONS					
short 1-5 yrs, medium 5-10 yrs, long 10+ yrs					
No.	Action	Short, medium or long term	Lead body	Key partners	Notes
1	Undertake a movement study (broader movement study for the town centre)	Short -medium	STC	CEC	Strategic review of movement within and around the town centre to inform various projects and improve pedestrian and vehicular movement
2	Undertake town centre accessibility improvements	Medium-long	CEC	STC	Improvement projects for movement - vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians around the town centre
3	Prepare an urban design framework/place shaping plan for town centre	Short -medium	STC	CEC	To prepare a framework to underpin the CA Management Plan and to identify and inform future strategic sites and projects as part of place shaping activities in the town
4	Prepare a public realm strategy for the town centre	Medium	STC	CEC	Wider public realm strategy including streets leading into Conservation Area
5	Secure planning obligations/CIL toward town centre improvements	ongoing	CEC	STC	As part of town centre redevelopment and other developments within adjacent to the town
6	Promote enhancements to Scotch Common and linkages to the park from the Conservation Area	Medium-long	STC	CEC	Improvements to parking and create a positive landscaped route to park
7	Investigate and implement the Congleton Road gateway project	Medium-long	STC	CEC, land owners	Regeneration of the area in proximity to the library, on Congleton Road linked to the enhancements of Scotch Common to create a positive gateway into the town centre
8	Promote a living above the shop project	Short - medium	STC	CEC, land owners	Make better use of vacant space on upper floors of buildings to encourage more town centre living .
9	Promote installation of cable or other below ground ICT	Short - medium	STC	CEC	To provide alternative to satellite based television alongside other management measures as part of wider town ICT initiative
10	Support enhancement of the Brook and green corridors/areas on the periphery of town centre, including Dingle Lake	Long	STC	CEC, landowners, Community	To enhance the southern green corridor and other areas of open space that influence the setting and impressions of the conservation area
11	Encourage improvements to the early evening/night-time economy of the town centre	Short- medium	STC	CEC, landowners	Develop a positive strategy toward re-balancing the evening/night time economy and encouraging more restaurants and outdoor dining opportunities, particularly around the Cobbles

STC - Sandbach Town Council, CEC – Cheshire East Council, SCHG – Sandbach Conservation and Heritage Group

NB: The recommended actions identified above are all aspirational and subject to the availability of resources and funding