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# Attenborough Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal



Nottinghamshire  
County Council

Planning

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas were first introduced following The Civic Amenities Act 1967 to protect the attractive historic character of towns and villages. Today the main protection of these areas comes under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 [the Act] and Planning Policy Guidance note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment [PPG 15].

Section 69 of the Act imposes a duty on the local planning authority to designate as a conservation area any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Designation introduces a control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides a basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest. Designation further enables a control over the lopping or felling of trees; advertisement control and a restriction on development rights. Local planning authorities can also withdraw certain permitted development rights, such as the replacement of windows and doors and the alteration of boundary walls, by the imposition of an Article 4(2) direction, if they feel these minor alterations would erode the special character or appearance of the area.

15 conservation areas have been designated by Broxtowe Borough Council.

## 1.2 The purpose of this appraisal

PPG 15 states: 'Section 71 of the Act places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. It is important that designation is not seen as an end in itself: policies will almost always need to

be developed which clearly identify what it is about the character or appearance of the area which should be preserved or enhanced, and set out the means by which that objective is to be pursued. Clear assessment and definition of an area's special interest and the action needed to protect it will help to generate awareness and encourage local property owners to take the right sort of action for themselves.'

This appraisal will aim to assess and define the special character of Attenborough Village conservation area by the methods described in the different sections below. Briefly, these will cover: an investigation of the historical development of the village; an analysis of its current appearance and character; a discussion of positive, negative and neutral factors which are having an effect on that appearance and character; and suggestions for the preservation and enhancement of the area.

The appraisal will further try to identify whether or not the existing area boundaries are still justified in the light of physical changes since their initial designation. If the character of an area has been seriously eroded by unsympathetic alterations and new developments, it might be necessary to reduce its size or even de-designate. On the other hand, early designations did not consider many 19th century elements of a settlement, particularly industrial areas and buildings, to warrant inclusion. Over the last 25 years these elements of our social and industrial heritage have become more valued, and so should be reconsidered in any appraisal process. This might lead to extensions that include such elements within an existing conservation area, or the designation of an entirely new area.

<sup>1</sup> Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 s.69

<sup>2</sup> Planning Policy Guidance note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment 1994 s.4

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

### **1.3 Planning Policy Framework**

The saved local plan policies set out the current framework of conservation policy (Policy E3). The Local Plan is due to be replaced by a new Local Development Framework (LDF). This conservation area appraisal will be used to support the conservation policy that will form part of the core strategy development plan document (DPD) and primary development control policies.

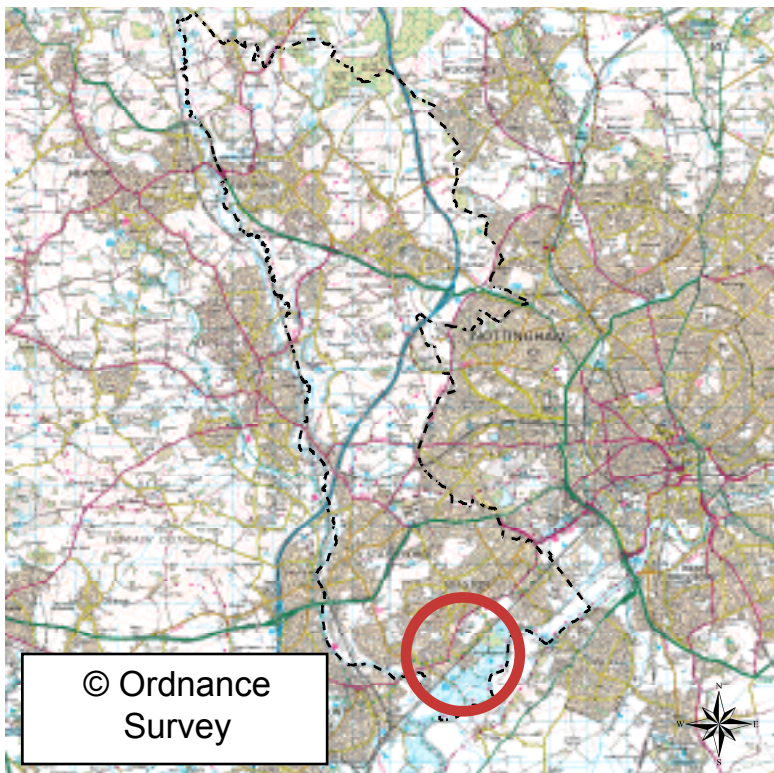


# 2.0 Attenborough Village Conservation Area

## 2.1 Location and Setting

Attenborough lies approximately six miles to the south-west of Nottingham city centre on the gravel terrace of the River Trent, which passes close by to the east. It is separated from the densely developed suburban mass of Beeston and Chilwell by the A6005 bye-pass road to its north-west. The old village core sits almost like an island within the wetlands of a nature reserve, developed from former gravel quarries, and is further isolated from surrounding development by a golf course and allotment gardens to the north. The village suffered in the floods of 2000 and flood defence works are currently being planned by the Environment Agency.

*Location of Attenborough*



## 2.2 Historical Development

In order to describe successfully the character of Attenborough Village, and to devise a suitable management strategy for the conservation area, it is essential to understand its historic dimension. By looking at the historic development of the area we can understand how it

came to be the way it is today. From this understanding we are better informed to make the right decisions regarding change to its physical fabric in relation to the effect on its historic character.

A village settlement at Attenborough probably occurred during the Anglo-Saxon period, possibly in relation to a crossing of the River Trent, although the gravel terraces here will have seen human activity much earlier: Prehistoric flint tools and Roman pot shards have been found during gravel extraction in the area.

Attenborough developed without a manorial or civil administration of its own: all its lands and dwellings fall within either Chilwell or Toton, so it is not mentioned in Domesday Book of 1089. Its church, however, is mentioned within Toton Parish. The Grade I listed Church of St Mary the Virgin dates from the 12th century, and may stand on the site of a pre-conquest church. To the immediate south-west of the church is a Grade II listed former farmhouse (Ireton House): a timber-framed building of the 16th century, with 19th century additions. Named after the Ireton family who purchased a rectorial lease on Attenborough in the early 17th century, Ireton House is the birthplace of Henry Ireton, brother-in-law to Oliver Cromwell, who rose to be a General in the New Model Army, and was instrumental in the execution of Charles I.

*St Mary's Church*





*Ireton House*

Within grass fields to the south of the church are earthworks of medieval fishponds that might be related to an earlier monastic structure on the site of Ireton House. They are thought to date from the 13th century and are a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument. In the neighbouring grass fields lie further earthworks of a bank and a possible house platform. These are also likely to date from the medieval period. Further evidence of medieval settlement within the village has been revealed through excavations which have found a coin hoard and a 14th century house platform.

The earliest part of the settlement probably lies in the region of the aforementioned earthworks and around Church Lane. The village then grew in a linear fashion eastwards along The Strand in the 17th and 18th centuries. 45 The Strand, a further Grade II listed building, lies at the eastern extreme of the village and contains remnants of 17th century timber-framing.

The Midland Railway laid a line to the north-west of the village in the 1830's and Attenborough Station opened in 1864. This drove the expansion of Attenborough to the north-west of the railway line and large houses were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Also a handful of prestigious dwellings in spacious plots were built within the former village fields to the east of the railway. Infilling occurred between these two locations during the second half of the 20th century.

Along with the aforementioned statutorily listed buildings, a number of buildings within the village are recorded on a county list of buildings of local significance. These are reproduced in Appendix 2.

# 3.0 Character Analysis

## 3.1 Conservation Area

Along with a consideration of the history and development of the area, an investigation of its character today is necessary in order to draw out those special qualities that warrant its conservation area designation. This is done by employing spatial analysis and character analysis.

These techniques can be used to describe a “sense of place” by analysing physical aspects, such as the scale of buildings and trees, and their relationship to open spaces; the materials used for buildings and border treatments; routes through the area; views and vistas into and out of the area; and the less tangible factors that help make up how the different areas are experienced, such as particular sounds, ambient noise and activity. These factors inter-relate to form an experience special to the area and give it its character.

The conservation area comprises the oldest part of the village to its north, and the village green and part of the wetland nature reserve to its south. This gives it two differing, but complementary, character zones. The area can only be accessed by car from Attenborough Lane, which diverges into Shady Lane, Church Lane, and The Strand. The conservation area can also be accessed from four footpaths, three of which emerge from the surrounding nature reserve.

The nature reserve was established in 1966 and is based around wetlands, which were formed out of former sand and gravel quarries of the Trent river terrace. The existence of the nature reserve has a great bearing on the character of the village: it surrounds the conservation area on three sides and contributes enormously to the feeling of rural seclusion along The Strand and Church Lane in particular.



*Footpath to nature reserve*



*Lake in nature reserve*

The village character is further enhanced by the village green, which serves both as an aesthetic and a social focal point. The green lies on the south side of The Strand and fine views reach out to the south and east, across the village green to tall trees beyond, which form a screen in the middle distance. The green acts as a centre of formal and informal recreation and houses cricket field, football pitches, and bowling greens.



*Village green south of The Strand*



*View north of The Strand across village green*

The Strand becomes a footpath at its eastern end, and curves round towards the north at its western end, where a further characteristic rural view appears of St Mary's Church spire emerging from tree cover beyond a grass field. The Strand has dwellings of various styles along its north side, with no particular type dominant. Along its long, straight section, where the housing faces the green from its north side, the dwellings are mostly of the 19th to early 20th century. They are set back a short distance from the road, the majority having gardens to their fronts. This pattern changes only at the extreme eastern end of the street, where three grand houses are set well back from their front boundaries, and hidden within large gardens. The western section of The Strand, after it makes a sharp turn towards the north, has only one late 19th century house which lies on its west side. On its east side, a number of late 20th century houses and bungalows have been built.

*Entrance from the east by footpath**St Mary's Church from The Strand*

The Strand at its western end meets Church Lane, which leads off in a U-shape to the west, and returns to The Strand/Attenborough Lane a little further along. The character of the conservation area changes on entering Church Lane, from one of long views and spaciousness to one of intimacy and enclosure. Its narrow, sinuous roadway is bordered by tall hedgerows, and there is no footway. Many tall fir trees block out the sky and, along with the spire of St Mary's Church, give the area a tall, vertical emphasis.

The Church is the dominant feature and is experienced dramatically as the corner is turned along Church Lane, because of the denseness of tree and hedge foliage. The houses here are large and varied in style, and most sit within individual plots with gardens of shrubs and trees. Ireton House, beside the church, has a spacious garden laid to lawn which can be seen over a low boundary wall, opening up the otherwise very enclosed nature of Church Lane.

*Narrow & intimate Church Lane*



*House in Church Lane*

Tall trees are also abundant within the gardens of the larger properties throughout the conservation area, and combine with the abundance of hedges and smaller leafy gardens to maintain its rural village character.

### **3.2 Public realm**

The way in which the public realm, such as the streets, footpaths, and open areas is maintained and developed over time can have an enormous impact on the character and appearance of a conservation area. The use of hard landscaping materials that have a design or colour that clashes with the usually muted traditional appearance of a conservation area, can seriously harm its historic character. Similarly, the inappropriate application of road markings, and installation of highway signage and other traffic management approaches will erode the character of an historic settlement if done in a zealous and unsympathetic manner.

The streets of the conservation area are free from excessive road-markings and traffic signage, which plays a very significant role in maintaining a peaceful rural feel. Grassy verges and minimal footpaths also contribute to this feeling. Low wooden posts, rather than concrete or metal bollards, have been used to deter parking on roadside verges. These have taken on a weathered appearance which works very well within the area. Many

old, weathered stone kerbs and stone sett details delineate roadway from footpath or driveway, and also contribute positively to the character of the public realm.

The footpaths are mainly of asphalt which works well, acting as a neutral feature that allows the eye to be drawn to the greenery and architecture. Areas of concrete footpath also exist, which do not work so well. The footpaths and roadways suffer from various patching work in places, which lowers the quality and unity of the public realm as a whole.

The design of the street lighting columns similarly lowers the quality of the area. Standard designs in galvanised finish have been used where black painted styles of a design more in keeping with the village character would be more appropriate. Older street lights still exist within the area, but are in poor condition and need their columns repainting.

### **3.3 Boundary treatments and parking areas**

As with the public realm, the way that residents within the conservation area treat their private boundaries also has a great impact on its historic character and appearance as a whole. Removing a historic boundary, to provide parking areas, or changing its materials of construction can have a dramatic erosive effect on a conservation area over time, as property after property is altered by successive owners to their personal taste.

Properties historically had a very limited range of boundary treatments which differed whether they were in a rural, urban, or latterly sub-urban location. Materials such as local stone or brick walling, timber post and rail fencing, hedgerows, or painted metal railings were usually employed. Boundary materials such as these, used in their correct context have a pleasing, unifying effect upon streets and settlements. Commonly,

these traditional materials are replaced with a wide variety of modern ones when they decay through lack of maintenance. This often results in an array of styles, colours and scales of boundary treatments that break up the unity of the street.

The choice of materials for hard-standing and driveways can also have a significant negative effect on the unity, character and appearance of a conservation area, through the use of too many different styles, colours and layouts.

The majority of the boundary treatments within the conservation area make a positive contribution to its appearance and support its rural character. Hedgerows of hawthorn, privet, yew, and holly predominate, often laid behind low walls of local sandstone. Old brick and stone walls also appear in the area, particularly in Church Lane. Most of the modern houses at the western end of The Strand have conserved the character of the area through the use of sympathetic boundary treatments. Only a handful of properties break up the unity of the area with rockeries or unusual boundary materials, the most noticeable being the concrete block walls of the preparatory school, and the brick walls of the village green car park entrance opposite.

Hard-standing and driveway treatments are having a more noticeable effect on the village character, particularly along Church Lane where a variety of materials have been employed, which are beginning to give the area a suburban appearance. Similarly, 15 The Strand has a wide expanse of asphalt to its frontage, where neighbouring properties have gardens.

### **3.4 Replacement windows**

There is a high proportion of UPVC windows within the conservation area: roughly 50% of the buildings have had them installed. Ten of these buildings are historic properties which would have had painted timber or steel windows originally. A further five properties have had dark stained timber windows fitted, two of these are historic buildings. The use of these types of windows in historic properties erodes their character and devalues the quality of the conservation area as a whole. They are the most harmful factor on the character and appearance of Attenborough Village conservation area.

### **3.5 Gap sites**

There are two areas within the conservation area that might come under development pressure in the future. The first is the area of grass fields to the south and east of the churchyard that abut The Strand, near the entrance to the nature reserve. This area should be discounted on two grounds. First, important views west from The Strand to the church, that contribute greatly to the rural character of the conservation area would be lost. Second, this area contains important archaeological remains, including a Scheduled Ancient Monument. These remains are crucial to the understanding of the development of the village.

The second area is the current tennis club, accessed from Shady Lane and enclosed behind properties fronting onto The Strand. The historic school building near the entrance contributes positively to the character of the conservation area and should be retained in any development proposal. The loss of the current pavilion, which is not a positive contributor to the area's character, would be required to gain sufficient access to the site. Designs and materials reflecting those of Cloud House on Shady Lane or of 1 Church Lane would best support the character

and appearance of this part of the conservation area. The border treatment facing Shady Lane should be of Privet hedging to integrate with surrounding characteristic boundary treatments.

### **3.6 Suggestions for extensions or reductions in the conservation area boundary**

No extension to the current conservation area seems necessary. A reduction in the conservation area is suggested at the northern end of Shady Lane. This part of the conservation area seems to exist solely in order to encompass the historic property of Field House at the extreme northern end of Shady Lane. The remainder of the properties here are of late 20th century construction and do not support the character of the conservation area, neither do views down Shady Lane or aspects of the public realm. It is suggested that the boundary here be reduced to the rear boundary of Cloud House as shown on map 2.

### **3.7 The impact of individual buildings and boundary treatments on the character**

Map 1 illustrates the impact made by individual buildings and their boundary treatments on the character of the conservation area. The buildings are shown as having either a positive, a negative or a neutral effect on the area's character, and have been compiled using the English Heritage guidance reproduced in Appendix 1. The boundary treatments are similarly illustrated as making either a positive, negative, or neutral contribution.

- Buildings described as positive, either positively enhance or support the character of the area, or are significant to its historic development. They may, however, be degraded because of minor, easily reversible, alterations.
- Buildings described as negative, erode or detract from the character of the area. They are either historic buildings whose appearance has been seriously damaged by unsympathetic alterations, or modern buildings which exhibit few of the characteristic elements that make the area special. They cannot be easily enhanced.
- Buildings described as neutral do not enhance the character of the area. It might be possible to improve their contribution to the character of the area by undertaking minor changes.
- Positive boundaries are those which follow the historic boundary lines of a property or area and retain the traditional methods of construction, such as: stone walling; native hedgerows; painted cast metal railings.
- Negative boundaries are those which have been lost altogether; have had their traditional construction replaced by unsympathetic alternatives; or are new boundaries of unsympathetic design which have eroded the historic layout of the area.
- Neutral boundaries do not greatly erode the character, but could be improved easily to make a positive contribution.

# 4.0 The key characteristics of the conservation area and current issues affecting them

Traditional architectural materials and features:

- Sandstone, orangey-red brick and brown local brick boundary walling
- Boundary hedges of Hawthorne, Holly, Yew, Privet
- Stone setts edging footpaths on The Strand
- Stone kerbs
- Brown local brick
- Orangey-red machine made brick
- Decorative terracotta ridge tiles
- Polychrome brick detailing
- Roof coverings of red plain tile, pantile and natural Welsh slate
- Cast iron rainwater goods
- Painted timber windows

Summary of special interest (strengths)

- Wide and long views over village green and fields bordering churchyard, to tree cover and skyline beyond are key contributors to rural character
- The close proximity of the nature reserve is a key factor in the rural appearance of the conservation area
- Heavy mature tree cover, leafy hedges and gardens, and twisting narrow lanes are important contributors to village appearance
- Views of St Mary's Church spire throughout the conservation area
- Boundary treatments of stone or brick walls and hedges provide local character and continuity to street frontages
- Minimal road markings and signs related to traffic management

Summary of erosive factors (weaknesses)

- High proportion of UPVC replacement windows erode the character and appearance of the

- historic buildings
- Uncharacteristic materials of some boundaries and driveways harm the character and harmony of the conservation area
- Designs and condition of street lighting columns lowers the quality of the area
- Patch repair work to roads and footpaths harms the quality and appearance of the area

Threats to the character of the conservation area

- Erosion of rural character of The Strand
- Potential for intrusive highway works to cope with increasing road traffic
- Potential loss of character through development of gardens and unsympathetic development of gap sites
- Loss and replacement of traditional boundary treatments
- Piecemeal loss of traditional architectural materials and features
- Loss of mature tree cover

Opportunities for enhancement

- Reinstatement of traditional front boundary treatments to repair rhythm of street frontages
- Simple regular property maintenance, such as the annual clearance and repair of rainwater guttering and a 5 yearly repainting of the timber windows, doors etc.
- Provision of guidance publications on designs and materials suitable for the conservation area
- Reinstatement of lost characteristic architectural features such as timber sliding-sash windows



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English Heritage 1996 Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals

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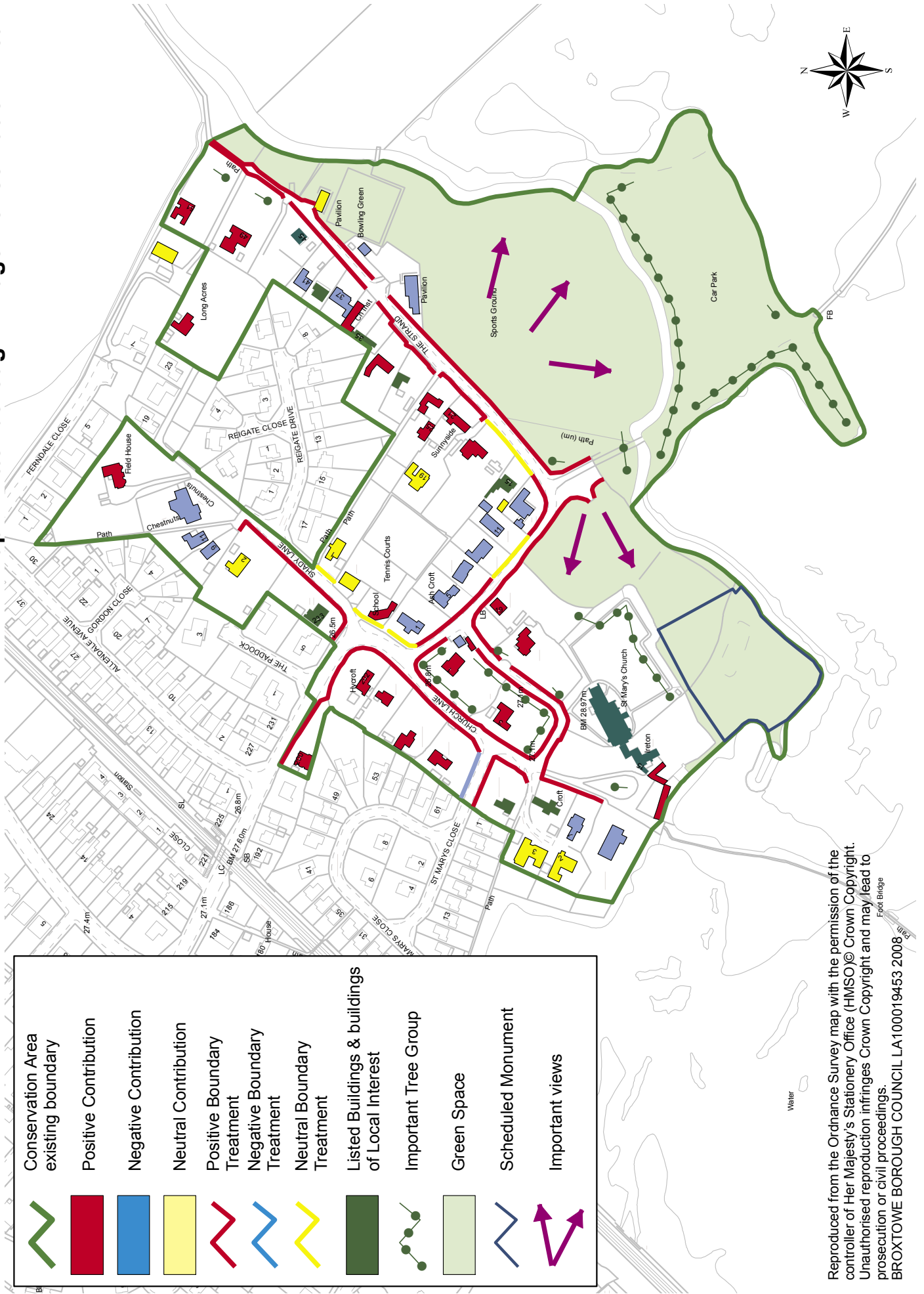
[www.nottshistory.org.uk](http://www.nottshistory.org.uk) – Nottinghamshire History

[www.pastscape.org](http://www.pastscape.org) – English Heritage National Monuments Record

[www.picturethepast.org.uk](http://www.picturethepast.org.uk) – Historic pictures of Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire

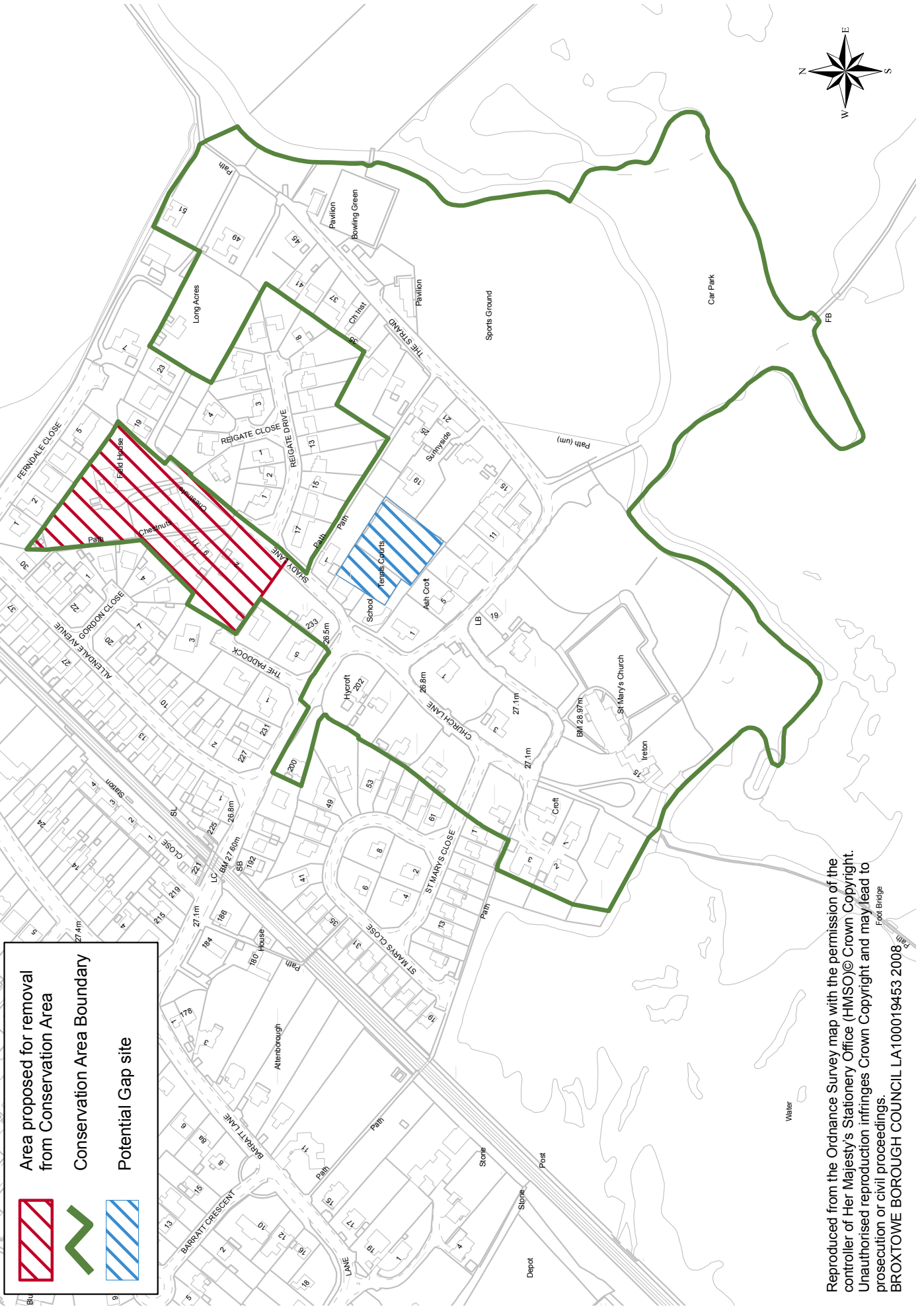
# 6.0 Maps

**Map 1: Attenborough Village Conservation Area**



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Map 2: Suggested changes to Conservation Area and potential gap sites



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# 7.0 Appendices

## APPENDIX 1

Criteria for assessing the contribution made by unlisted buildings in a conservation area<sup>4</sup>

1. Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?
2. Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of at least a substantial number of the buildings in the conservation area?
3. Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?
4. Does it individually, or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or of an earlier phase of growth?
5. Does it have significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
6. Does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces, including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?
7. Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area?
8. Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?
9. Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area?
10. If a structure associated with a designed landscape within the conservation area, such as a significant wall, terracing or a minor garden building, is it of identifiable importance to the historic design?

Any one of these characteristics could provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of a conservation area, provided that its historic form and values have not been seriously eroded by unsympathetic alteration.



APPENDIX 2

Statutorily listed and locally listed buildings within Attenborough Village

Grade I      Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane

Grade II      Ireton House, Church Lane  
45 (Rose Cottage) The Strand

Local list    233 Attenborough Lane  
Croft Cottage, Church Lane  
Thatched House, Church Lane  
15 (Grove Cottage) The Strand  
29 (Elmsdale) The Strand  
33 (Dale Cottages) The Strand  
39 (Hawthornes) The Strand



**This report has been produced by Broxtowe Borough Council Planning Department and Nottinghamshire County Council Building Conservation Team**

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