



Broxtowe
Borough
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Beeston West End 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'¹. 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 area².

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.'³

This appraisal will aim to assess and define the special character of Beeston West End conservation area by the methods described in the different sections below. Briefly, these will cover: an investigation of the historical development of the town; 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.

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 s.69

² Planning Policy Guidance note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment 1994 s.4

³ *ibid.*

1.3 Planning Policy Framework

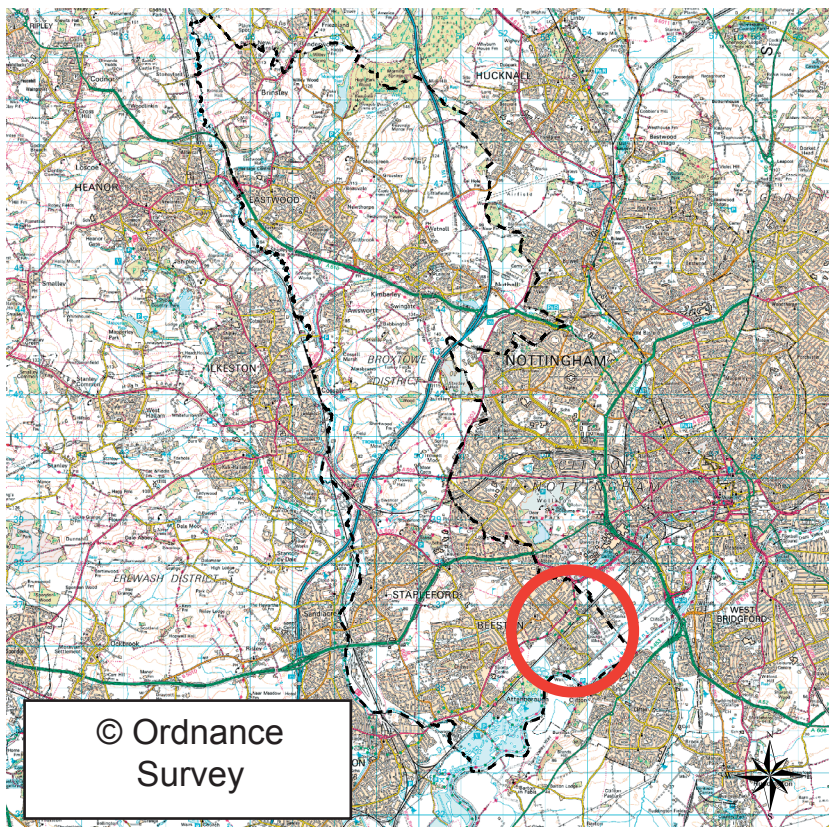
The saved local plan policies set out the current framework of conservation policy (Policy E3). The Local Plan is due to be replaced by a new Local Development Framework (LDF). This conservation area appraisal will be used to support the conservation policy that will form part of the core strategy development plan document (DPD), primary development control policies, DPD and the Beeston Town Centre supplementary Planning Document (SPD) of the new LDF. The Beeston Town Centre SPD was adopted on 17th June 2008.

2.0 Beeston West End Conservation Area

2.1 Location and Setting

The West End conservation area lies to the south of Beeston town centre, which lies four miles south-west of the centre of Nottingham. Beeston is situated on a gravel terrace of the River Trent, with the ground sloping gently down to the river to the south, and rising gently to the north.

Location of Beeston West End



The name 'Beeston' is a fairly common English place name of old English origin and a notable settlement here probably originated during the Anglo Saxon period. Beeston appears as Bestune in Domesday and records of a church here go back to the 12th century. The settlement remained a small agrarian community on the Trent river terrace until the early 18th century. After this time, as with many surrounding settlements, framework knitting arrived in the village. This domestic hosiery and lace manufacture developed Beeston into a small industrial town by the 19th century, with many tall mills throughout the town.

Beeston's industrial base diversified further in the late 19th century, when there were four cycle works in production, the most notable being the Humber works. Furthermore, Nottingham manufacturers and merchants began to settle in Beeston, attracted by the close proximity to the city; good rail communications; and the areas of high class housing that were being built. Beeston today has practically merged into the southern urban growth of Nottingham, separated only by the open spaces of the university campus.

2.2 Historical Development

In order to describe successfully the character of the conservation area, and to devise a suitable management strategy, 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.

Beeston West End conservation area roughly corresponds with what is thought to be the earliest settlement of Beeston. It encompasses St John the Baptist's Church and the oldest buildings of the town, most of which are grade II listed. It includes the roads West End, Dovecote Lane, Grange Avenue, Middle Street, and Church Street; and has the High Road/ Chilwell Road as its western border.

Middle Street and West End were probably the main route from Nottingham to Chilwell during the medieval period, and

the modern day High Road/Chilwell Road may have acted as a back lane. The layout of this oldest part of the settlement appears untypical in that the church is located in such a peripheral location, and there appears to have been no particular focus: the Parliamentary Enclosure map of 1809 shows no obvious concentration of buildings at that time. The fact that the manor of Beeston was fragmented into different ownership in the early medieval period may be one reason why the 'village core' appears unfocussed.

St John the Baptist's Church dates largely from an 1842-4 rebuild by Scott & Moffat, although medieval parts remain in the chancel. The remains of the former village cross, thought to be of the 14th century have been re-sited to the east of the church, outside the former Board School.

The oldest buildings aside from the church, dating from the 17th and 18th centuries appear along West End, some of which were formerly farmhouses. The 17th century Manor House stands on Middle Street near its junction with West End and Dovecote Lane. In all, ten grade II listed buildings fall within the conservation area, along with three grade II listed memorials and four buildings listed for their local interest. These appear in Appendix 1 and are shown on Map 1.

3.0 The Different Character Areas

3.1 Beeston West End conservation area character analysis

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.

West End conservation area was designated in 1976 to conserve the ‘village core’ of this older part of Beeston. A review of the conservation area in 1995 reiterated this stating; “The wide range of building uses, together with the area’s narrow streets, old brick walls and mature trees create a village-like atmosphere. It is this character which the conservation area seeks to protect” (Broxtowe Borough Council 1995).

The above description seems to focus mainly on that part of the conservation area south of Middle Street, and particularly on West End itself. The area north of Middle Street, and south of Middle Street where it joins Chilwell Road, exhibits a noisier, livelier, more open and disjointed character, with many large and disparate buildings. Along Dovecote Lane, Grange Avenue, and West End, a quieter, more village-like, intimate and enclosed character remains, with more

harmonious buildings of similar scale and materials of construction. Therefore the conservation area today seems to fall into two character zones. These are described below and are shown on Map 2.

3.2 Zone 1 – Northern

The zone is dominated by St John the Baptist’s Church, a listed building that sits within its cemetery, the gravestones of which have been repositioned to its edges to create a welcome green space. The church tower, tall mature trees, and the green expanse of the churchyard are an immensely important historic reference point and oasis in an otherwise quite densely developed spot.



St John the Baptist Church from the east



Board School from the south

The other remaining historic buildings along Church Street are the former Victorian Board School and adjacent lodge; the Crown Inn; and the Manor Lodge, both on the junction with Middle Street. The listed inn and locally listed Manor Lodge, both probably of the early 19th century, indicate that this area has

some depth to its settlement history, but the settings of both have been harmed by the widening and extension of Middle Street.



Crown Inn at top of Church Street



New apartments adjacent to Board School

The locally listed former Board School and adjacent lodge, built in the late 19th century, have recently been incorporated into an apartment complex of 'bold modern design'. The new buildings of the complex work well in this setting from some angles, but their taller elements dominate the skyline and appear 'slab-like' from others, subordinating the church tower and tree-line. The Board School is an attractive landmark building of red brick with extensive fine limestone detailing and polychrome tiled roof, architectural features that are mirrored in a more subdued style on its adjacent lodge.

On the west side of Church Street, between the church and the Crown Inn, another new development of apartments is being erected, of a smaller scale than those opposite, but also seemingly of a less bold design. They were incomplete at

the time of this appraisal.

To the rear of this development lies the doctor's surgery and the massed car parks of the surgery and the Crown Inn. Adjacent to the surgery and the church is the vicarage. The surgery is a squat building on a large footprint. Its design is a little incongruous in this setting, but it has been constructed of materials sympathetic to the general appearance of the conservation area (reddish bricks and slate roofing), it defers to the taller historic buildings surrounding it, and its impact has been softened by the tall trees to its side and rear.

Manor Surgery



Vicarage & tall fencing



The vicarage is a late 20th century non-descript two-storey house of yellow brick and concrete tile roof. It is partially obscured from view by a tall close-boarded fence. Neither the house nor the fence positively contribute to the character and appearance of the area.

Zone 1 continues on the south side of Middle Street to include the large corner

plot of The Grange; the Methodist Church and a large late 19th century semi-detached house on Chilwell Road. These three structures are of a similar scale and diversity to those described above and so fit better in zone 1, than in the more intimate residential character of zone 2, which they adjoin.

The Grange, a listed grand house of the early 19th century, currently houses part of the police station. There is car parking to the front and rear and a large extension to the side. The Grange now sits very close to the busy Middle Street and acts as a landmark building on its prominent corner site. Mature trees to its front and rear soften the urbanising effect of the highway works associated with the busy road junction, and harmonise with those of the churchyard opposite.



Chilwell Road Methodist Church



North end of Church Street now a 'dead end'

The large red brick Victorian semi is currently occupied by a doctors surgery. Unfortunately the building presents its extensively altered rear elevation to

Chilwell Road, and so does not contribute as much to the appearance of the area as it otherwise might. The neighbouring Gothic Methodist Church of 1902, however, provides another fine quality landmark building to mark the southern entrance to the conservation area.

Main Issues

The historic character and appearance of zone 1 has been more heavily eroded than zone 2 because of more extensive redevelopment in the second half of the 20th century. The narrow roads of Chapel Street and Church Lane, with their small 19th century dwellings, chapels, and Sunday Schools were lost, and Church Street truncated in the late 1960's, to accommodate the current shopping arcade and multi-storey car park to the immediate north of the area. The transformation of Church Street into a 'dead-end' has had a particularly harmful effect on the appearance of the area. The view north along Church Street now presents the rear loading-bay elevations of the shops of the arcade, the only through-route being a narrow, contorted footpath to the bus station.

Church lost behind development to its north



Mature trees soften hard landscaping



Beeston town centre is due to be redeveloped and a new plan was adopted in June 2008. The aforementioned shopping arcade, along with adjacent multi-storey car park and bus station are to be replaced. This redevelopment ought to provide an opportunity to reconnect the severed Church Street to The Square and open up the north end of the churchyard to visually connect the church to the main commercial centre of the town.

3.3 Zone 2 – Southern (Map 2)

This zone exudes a more peaceful, quieter character than zone 1. It is exclusively residential in nature and includes the majority of the conservation area's listed buildings within its leafy and enclosed gardens. The character of the zone is typified by historic detached and semi-detached dwellings within leafy gardens with tall trees, behind brick or stone boundary walls, most of which are six feet tall along West End. This zone has also had two large sheltered accommodation complexes built within its bounds.

To the north of the zone, adjacent to the busy Middle Street, and in a rather peripheral position within the conservation area, is The Manor House. This tall, 17th century listed building presents its rear elevation to the public realm, but nonetheless, along with the Manor House Lodge across the street, provides an attractive visual gateway to the conservation area on entering from the

east, along Middle Street. The Manor House has a large walled garden to the south which abuts Venn Court, one of the sheltered housing developments.

Listed 17th century Manor House, Middle St.



Tall red brick walls along narrow West End



Venn Court comprises 25 self-contained flats built in the early 1980's of generic design. Because of its low-level construction and location, it is largely screened from view. Despite this, its massed nature conflicts with the character of this zone and does not positively enhance its appearance. It should therefore be considered for exclusion from the conservation area.

The historic heart and character of this zone, and of the conservation area in general, lies within West End and Grange Avenue. The main access for both of these streets is via the southern end of Church Street, south of Middle Street. On entering this area the character changes rapidly from that of a noisy main road to one of a quieter, tree shaded residential

area of verdant gardens and old brick and stone walls.



Houses hidden in gardens along West End



Grange Avenue, leafy & quiet

West End itself is the older part of the village and appears as a narrow road, made more intimate by the tall boundary walling of the large houses on either side. The old houses are set back from the road within spacious gardens and can be glimpsed through gates and over walls. Some are former farmhouses dating from the 17th century and have stable blocks associated with them.

Grange Avenue, a former access to The Grange in zone 1, now forms a short cul-de-sac mainly of large Edwardian red brick semi's, with low boundary walls of local limestone. These houses are of high quality and retain a large percentage of their original features, such as sliding sash windows and plain tile roof coverings with decorative ridge tiles.

Fine Edwardian house with original features



Low limestone wall in Grange Avenue



The southern part of this zone extends along Dovecote Lane where it encompasses the second sheltered housing development of 'The Willows', built on the site of a former large Victorian house of the same name. The southern end of the site has been turned into a small public park. Part of Dovecote Lane itself is included within the conservation area along with only one property: that of number 19, the former Goat Inn, on its east side.

Dovecote Lane is an attractive narrow lane forming a shallow hollow-way, most noticeable at its north end, where it forms a distinctive southern entrance to the conservation area. The top of the lane has been subjected to late 20th century developments, however, that detract from the special character of the conservation area. Highfield Court in particular has a substantial negative impact on the historic layout, character and appearance of this important part of the old village. The boundary of the conservation area has been drawn in tightly at this point to

exclude this development and appears oddly shaped and incoherent as a result, cutting off the important historic site of the Manor House from the rest of the old village core.



The Willows development



19 Dovecote Lane and ugly boundary fencing

The Willows development conflicts with the character of this zone in the same way as Venn Court, but in a more visible way. It is a massive construction which sits high above Dovecote Lane, dominating the historic road junction and the views south from this point of the conservation area.

Main Issues

Although not as radically redeveloped as zone 1, this zone has lost much of its village character since the early 20th century. West End and Grange Avenue remain largely unchanged but the building of the various sheltered accommodation complexes has introduced design elements and materials that conflict with, rather than harmonise with, the historic buildings.

3.4 Public realm

The dominant feature of the public realm within the conservation area is the presence of Middle Street. This was originally a quiet, narrow street that terminated at its junction with the larger Church Street, where the two widened to form the old market place. Church Street headed north to join the High Road, which had become the main thoroughfare from Nottingham through to Chilwell. Middle Street was widened and extended west through to join the Chilwell Road in the 1960's, presumably to alleviate road traffic along the High Road, which became pedestrianised. This has resulted in the most historic part of the settlement being divided in two and has had a detrimental effect on the quality, integrity and 'readability' of the historic dimension of the conservation area today. The road is busy and difficult to cross, which has resulted in the addition of a pedestrian controlled crossing.



Pedestrian crossing & war memorial



Middle Street divides the conservation area

The location and design of the crossing is very unsympathetic to the character and appearance of the conservation area. It is directly adjacent to the listed war memorial and close to the listed Manor House. It comprises eight large traffic-light heads supported on four tall, dog-legged posts. The priority for its location seems to have been the close proximity of the sheltered accommodation, but its scale and design and its associated galvanised railings are too dominant for a conservation area and seriously harm the setting of the memorial. Other than this, the public realm is largely uncluttered by unnecessary street signs, over-zealous road markings and street furniture.

Generous tree plantings and areas of grass bordering the busy Middle Street help to reduce its visual impact on the area. The many mature trees and green churchyard contribute an important 'natural' element to the conservation area, providing a link to its rural past.

Boundary treatments

The survival or loss of historic plot boundaries; the use of traditional regional boundary materials; and the introduction of varying styles and methods of boundary treatment can have an enormous impact on the overall character and appearance of a conservation area. Map 1 shows that the majority of existing boundaries make a positive contribution to the conservation area.



Shrubs & bollards form west border of churchyard

Characteristic red brick boundary walls



Four locations have been highlighted as making a negative contribution. These could all be easily remedied. Uncharacteristic close-boarded fencing has been introduced around the vicarage, number 8 Hall Croft, and number 19 Dovecote Lane. All of these boundary treatments would make a positive contribution if they were changed to red brick walling or traditional hedging. Changing the vicarage boundary in particular to a tall red brick wall to echo that on the south side of Middle Street, would improve the appearance and continuity of this high profile part of the conservation area.

The low wall to the front of The Grange could be similarly improved by the use of matching brick work topped by suitably designed black railings.

The west side of the churchyard lacks a traditional boundary at present, being delineated by shrubs and ugly concrete bollards. The introduction of a low brick wall topped by railings, like those to the east side of the churchyard would greatly enhance this area.

4.0 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.

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

5.1 Summary of special interest (strengths)

- High profile landmark buildings in the two churches, the former Board School, the Grange, and the Manor House, which provide important historic reference points.
- A high survival of characteristic historic boundary treatments, i.e. tall red brick walls throughout the conservation area; low rustic limestone walls along Grange Avenue.
- A fine collection of historic buildings listed for national and local significance.
- Extensive mature tree cover which provides a link to Beeston's rural past and softens its later urban development.
- A low level of highway related clutter, i.e. signs, road markings, railings, barriers.
- The important green space of the churchyard and other smaller grassed areas break up the dominant hard-landscaping.
- A tangible remnant of the old village and its agricultural beginnings along West End.

5.2 Summary of erosive factors (weaknesses)

- The wide and busy Middle Street divides the conservation area: the feeling of priority for the car over the pedestrian is very apparent.

- The location and design of the pedestrian crossing on Middle Street is inappropriate for a conservation area and harms the setting of the listed war memorial.
- The truncation of Church Street and the 'hemmed in' north side of the churchyard damages this key part of the conservation area and reduces its potential as a positive contributor.
- The vicarage and Manor surgery harm the setting of the listed church and public house and dilute the quality of the conservation area.
- The design and location of the several sheltered accommodation complexes in zone 2 have eroded the character and appearance of the old village core.
- Areas of low quality and uncharacteristic boundary treatments erode the area's character and appearance.

5.3 Threats to the character of the conservation area

- Further development which does not refer to the historic dimension of the conservation area through its street pattern, local distinctiveness, scale and layout.
- Continued priority for the car over the pedestrian will lead to further street clutter and erosion of the remaining, village-like characteristics of the conservation area.

- Unsympathetically designed new developments and the loss of characteristic boundary treatments and architectural features through uninformed piecemeal development could result in the loss of conservation area status.

5.4 Opportunities for enhancement

- Replacement or reinstatement of negative boundary locations with materials that will positively enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- The Middle Street pedestrian crossing should be relocated to remove its negative impact on the war memorial, and redesigned on a smaller scale to suit its conservation area setting.
- The forthcoming redevelopment of the adjacent shopping centre should consider the historic dimension of the area as a priority design leader, reinstating Church Street as a thoroughfare and St John the Baptist's church as a focal point.

5.5 Suggestions for boundary changes to the conservation area

The character appraisal found no reasons for extending the boundary of the conservation area to include any neighbouring areas. On the contrary, the appraisal process found that some areas of the conservation area should be considered for removal. Two separate areas should be considered, they are presented below and illustrated on Map 3.

Area 1 – Venn Court. This massed, sheltered accommodation development is

out of character with zone 2 and located in a peripheral part of the conservation area, being hidden behind the Manor House and other housing developments. It is largely invisible and contributes nothing in appearance or character. There is no reason for its being within the conservation area and its removal would not compromise any neighbouring part.

Area 2 – West End in region of Alwyn Court. A more logical route for the boundary at this point would seem to be to encompass the grounds of the historic building at 8 Hall Croft, rather than include that part of West End in front of Alwyn Court, a late 20th century apartment complex which is uncharacteristic of zone 2.

5.6 Traditional architectural materials and features

- Low boundary walling of local sandstone (Grange Avenue)
- Tall red brick boundary walling
- Wrought iron railings
- Orangey-red machine made brick
- Decorative terracotta ridge tiles
- Limestone window and door surrounds
- Roof coverings of plain tile or natural Welsh slate
- Cast iron rainwater goods
- Ornate moulded brick string courses
- Painted timber sash windows

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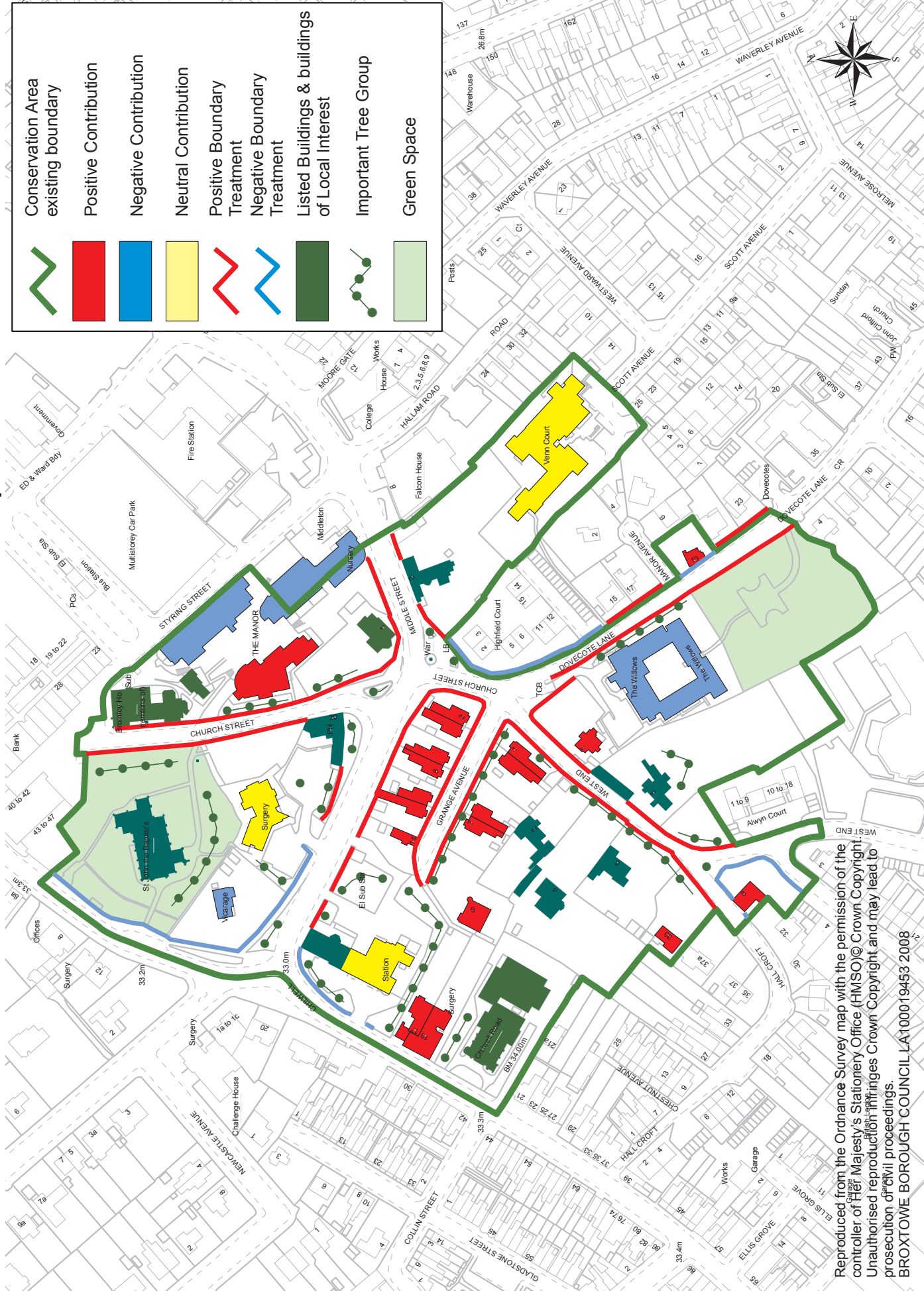
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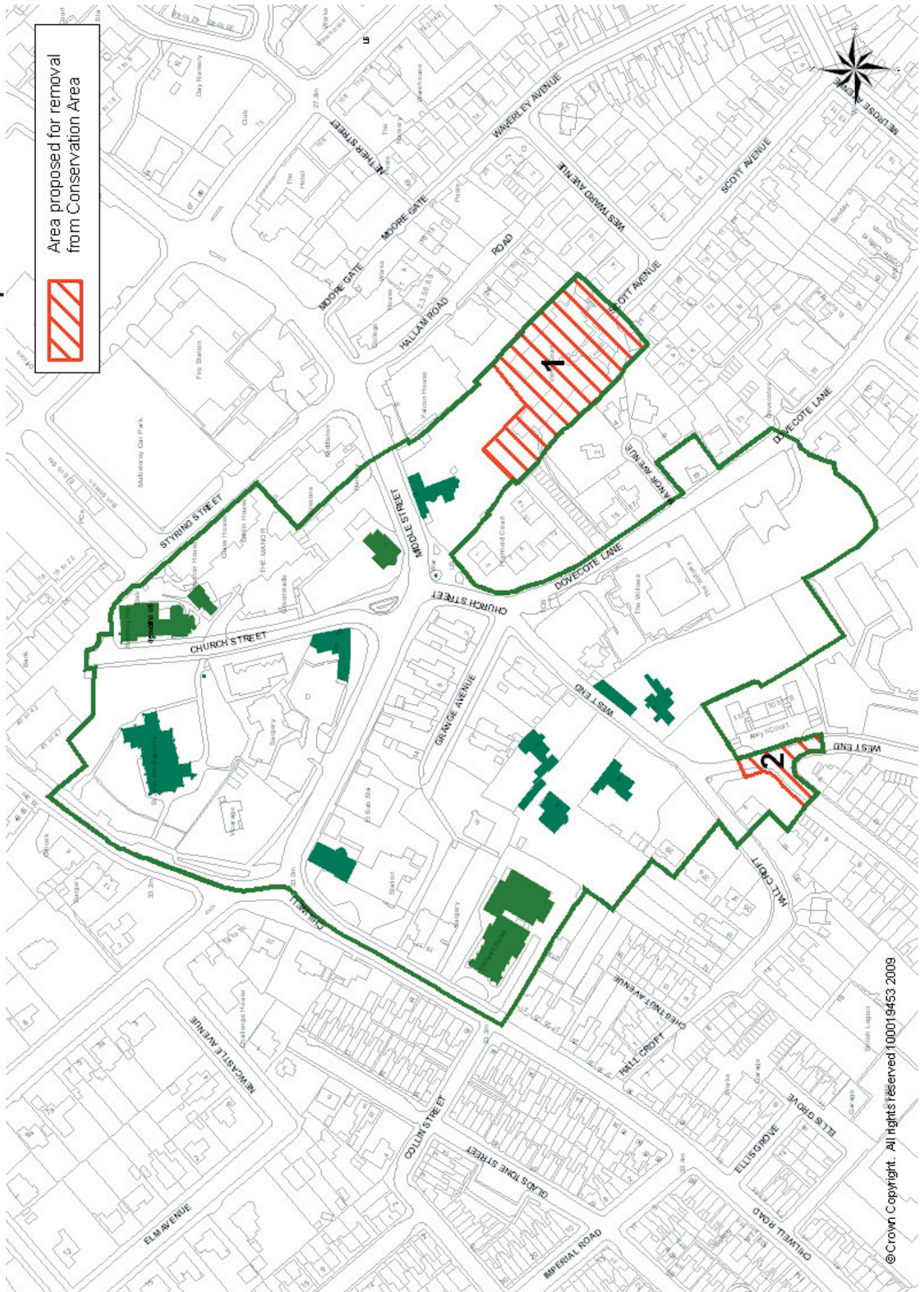
Maps

Map 1: Beeston West End Conservation Area



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Map 3: Areas to be removed



7.0 Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Listed Buildings within the conservation area

Grade II

The Grange (Police Station), Chilwell Road C19

Church of St John the Baptist, Church Street C15

Crimean War Memorial, Church of St John the Baptist C19

18 & 20 (The Crown Inn & adjoining stable) Church Street C19

Village Cross, Church Street C14

2 & 2A (The Manor House), inc. wall and wash house, Middle Street C17

War Memorial Cross, Middle Street C20

No.2 (The Old Cottage) West End C17

No.3 (Old Manor House), West End C17

Stables at 3 (Old Manor House), West End C19

No.4 (The Elms) and adj. water pump, West End C19

Stables at 4 The Elms, West End C19

No.6 (West End House), West End C17

Local Interest

Methodist Church, Chilwell Road

Bromley House (former Board School), Church Street

No.1 (Manor Lodge), Church Street

Former Board School lodge, Church Street

APPENDIX 2

Criteria for assessing the contribution made by unlisted buildings in a conservation area⁴

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.

⁴ English Heritage 2006 Guidance on conservation area appraisals, Appendix 2



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

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