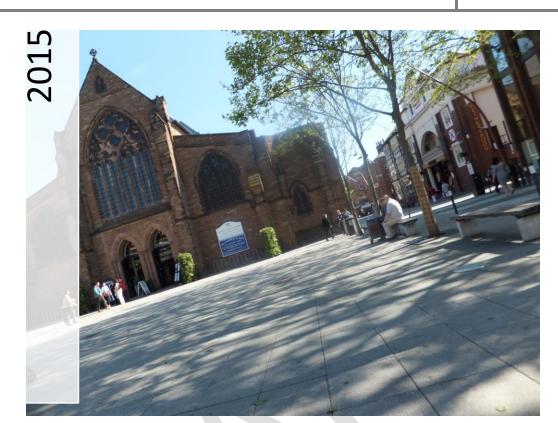
Walsall Town Centre

Area Action Plan: Characterisation Study





CONTENTS

Part I: Introduction

- 1.0 Background
 - 1.1 What is a characterisation?
 - 1.2 What is the purpose of characterisation?
 - 1.3 Historic perspective
- Legislation and planning policy framework 2.0
 - 2.1 Legislation
 - 2.2 The Development Plan
 - 2.2.1 National planning policy Framework
 - 2.2.2 The Unitary Development Plan
 - 2.2.3 The Black Country Core Strategy.
 - 2.3 Other Policy Documents
- 3.0 Methodology
 - 3.1 Context
 - 3.1.1 Urban Historic Characterisation
 - 3.1.2 Historic Area Assessments
 - 3.1.3 Conservation Area Appraisals & Management Plans.
 - 3.2 Guidance
 - 3.3 The Walsall survey
 - 3.3.1 Previous Works Contributing to the Evidence Base
 - 3.3.1.1 The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation
 - 3.3.1.2 The Wolverhampton and Walsall Historic Environment Record
 - 3.3.2 Geographical scope
 - 3.3.3 Data collection and recording

- 3.4 Historic Urban Character Areas
 - 3.4.1 Residential
 - 3.4.2 Industrial
 - 3.4.3 Retail
 - 3.4.4 Commercial
 - 3.4.5 Infrastructure
 - 3.4.6 Mixed use
- 3.5 Sensitivity Analysis
- 3.6 Limitations
 - 3.6.1 Alterations to AAP Boundary

Part II: Characterisation of Walsall

- 4.0 Summary of Special interest
 - 4.1 An overview of Walsall town centre
 - 4.2 Character Areas
 - 4.2.1 Canal Link
 - 4.2.1.1 Top Lock
 - 4.2.1.2 Walsall Canal
 - 4.2.1.3 St. Andrew's
 - 4.2.1.4 Emmanuel School
 - 4.2.1.5 Checketts Street
 - 4.2.1.6 Forrester Street
 - 4.2.1.7 Waterfront Way
 - 4.2.1.8 Pleck Road
 - 4.2.1.9 Green Lane Estate
 - 4.2.1.10 Birchills Street
 - 4.2.1.11 Waterfront North
 - 4.2.1.12 Waterfront South
 - 4.2.1.13 Bridgeman Street
 - 4.2.1.14 Crown Wharf
 - 4.2.1.15 The Railway
 - 4.2.1.16 Wolverhampton Street Junction
 - 4.2.1.17 St. Patrick's
 - 4.2.2 Town End
 - 4.2.2.1 Stafford Street (North)

- 4.2.2.2 Wisemore
- 4.2.2.3 The College
- 4.2.2.4 Portland Street
- 4.2.2.5 Saw Mill Close
- 4.2.2.6 Hatherton Street (North)
- 4.2.2.7 100 Hatherton Street
- 4.2.2.8 Littleton Street
- 4.2.2.9 Albert Street
- 4.2.2.10 Stafford Street (South)
- 4.2.2.11 St. Paul's Street
- 4.2.2.12 Townend
- 4.2.2.13 Art gallery
- 4.2.2.14 Park Street (west)
- 4.2.2.15 Station Street
- 4.2.2.16 Station

4.2.3 Civic Centre

- 4.2.3.1 Hatherton Road
- 4.2.3.2 Civic Centre
- 4.2.3.3 **Bus Station**
- 4.2.3.4 Leicester Street
- 4.2.3.5 Council House
- 4.2.3.6 Saddlers Centre
- 4.2.3.7 Park Street (East)
- 4.2.3.8 The Bridge
- 4.2.3.9 Bridge Street (West)
- 4.2.3.10 St. Matthew's Hall
- 4.2.3.11 Bridge Street (East)
- 4.2.3.12 Victorian Arcade
- 4.2.3.13 High Street
- 4.2.3.14 Lower Hall Lane
- 4.2.3.15 George Street

4.2.4 Chuckery and Arboretum

- 4.2.4.1 **Upper Forster Street**
- 4.2.4.2 Queen Mary's
- 4.2.4.3 Arboretum
- 4.2.4.4 Hatherton Street (South)
- 4.2.4.5 Arboretum Junction
- 4.2.4.6 Lower Forster street
- Lichfield Street 4.2.4.7
- 4.2.4.8 **Broadway North**
- 4.2.4.9 Persehouse Street
- 4.2.4.10 Intown Row
- 4.2.4.11 Holtshill Lane
- 4.2.4.12 Lower Rushall Street

4.2.4.13 Paddock Lane

4.2.5 Church Hill

4.2.5.1 **Goodall Street** 4.2.5.2 Guildhall 4.2.5.3 Ablewell Street 4.2.5.4 Peal Street 4.2.5.5 St. Matthew's 4.2.5.6 Town Hill 4.2.5.7 Church Street 4.2.5.8 Bullock's Row 4.2.5.9 Bott Lane 4.2.5.10 New Street 4.2.5.11 Bluecoat 4.2.5.12 Birmingham Road

4.2.5.13 Lysways Street

4.2.6 Bradford Street

4.2.6.1 Midland Road (North) 4.2.6.2 **Bradford Place** 4.2.6.3 Midland Road (South) 4.2.6.4 Bradford Street (North) Bradford Street (South) 4.2.6.5 4.2.6.6 Caldmore Road 4.2.6.7 Wednesbury Road (North) 4.2.6.8 Wednesbury Road (South) 4.2.6.9 Vicarage Place 4.2.6.10 Dudley Street 4.2.6.11 St. Mary's The Mount 4.2.6.12 Glebe Street 4.2.6.13 Earls Court 4.2.6.14 Bath Street Gardens

Appendices

Appendix 1: Conservation Areas Appendix 2: Listed buildings

Appendix 3: Locally listed buildings

PART I: INTRODUCTION



Background 1.0

1.1 What is a characterisation?

All places have their own identity. It is this individuality that allows us to recognise place and establishes an identity that communities associate with that place.

across the world developed independently and as a result of a series of local factors including geography, topography, geology and association with other towns and settlements. As progress developed so did the appearance and function of these 'places'.

Characterisation is the way in which 'places' are assessed, understood and recorded. It can take a variety of forms, but for urban areas this typically comprises Urban Historic Characterisation, Historic and Conservation Assessments. Area Appraisals and Management Plans. These are explored in depth in Section 3 of this report.

1.2 What is the purpose of characterisation?

Undertaking characterisation allows us to establish values that inform the significance of our towns. From this we can formulate policy, undertake sound management and monitor conditions and the success of decision making.

The very nature of the planning process is a balancing exercise of environmental, social and economic roles, with sustainability the golden thread. It is important that all decisions and judgements are based on a robust 'evidence base'.

The preparation of planning policy is central to the decision making process of development and change in our towns. Characterisation formulates the evidence base behind design and heritage policies in order to steer the right kind of change in the right areas.

The characterisation undertaken in this document is, in the first instance, being prepared to support the policies of the Walsall Area Action Plan (AAP). The AAP is a long term plan which will allocate sites within the town centre for the development of new shops, leisure opportunities and offices for the town centre, as well as setting out strategies for other aspects of the town centre, including transportation and the environment.

As towns change over time through a number of factors including commerce, demographics and culture, each of these factors alters the character of the place and this needs to be monitored. Characterisation needs therefore to be reviewed, updated and monitored on a regular basis which allows the identification of trends in condition of the town to be gathered, which can then provide evidence to support policy which will enable its preservation and conservation...

1.3 Historic perspective

Walsall town centre developed around a medieval cruciform street pattern, which connected Church Hill to the Bridge. The highest point of the town is Church Hill, which along with St Matthew's Church formed the historic focal point of the town.

The town has a heritage that dates back to Anglo-Saxon and Roman Britain, with current built heritage still evident from the past 700 years, showing clear references to mediaeval street plans and burgage plots. Subsequent layers of development have emerged over this historic form, with the most evident period of change being through the late 18th through to early 20th century, that constituting the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian expansion of trade, industry, communication networks and housing.

The centre of Walsall radiates northwards from its ancient core around the original hill top settlement, of which the parish church survives as a major landmark. The medieval town encircled the church, and although largely lost during 20th century 'slum clearance' is still evident in the High Street that survives and links the church to the crossing of the Walsall Brook.

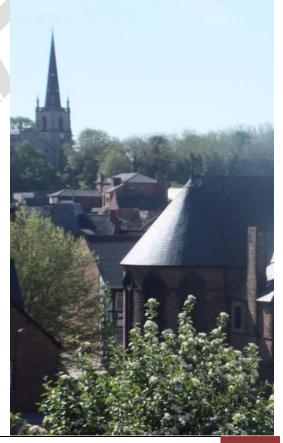
Leading down from the church, High Street has some attractive buildings including the listed Guildhall, Black Country Arms and the Market Tavern public houses, and the area is rich in both architectural and social history. This area was the original centre of the town, and a market has been held in High Street since c.1220AD when the market charter was granted. The street is wide with a cobbled surface, and a steep incline up to the church.

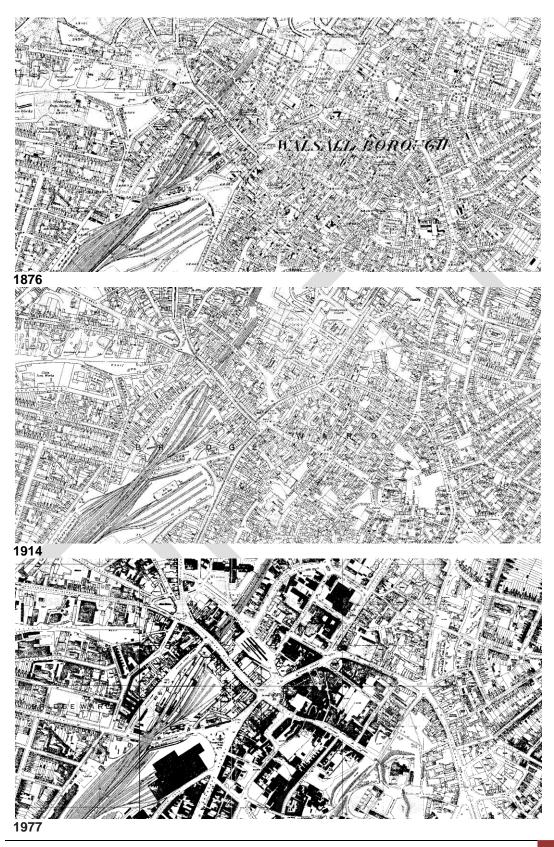
At the end of High Street the crossing of the Walsall Brook is now culverted and is still known today as 'The Bridge' (forming the hub of the modern day town) comprised the outer extent of the town by the late 14th when buildings had century established on the far side, along modern day Park Street. This linear route through the town, along with Bridge Street and Bradford Place form the modern town's retail core.

Leading off Park Street, Station Street has been an important gateway to the town centre due to the presence of Walsall railway station since the 1840s. It provided convenient access to the railway network during the Industrial Age, which saw the saddlery and leather goods industry expand in this area. The buildings here range from the compact terraced properties to larger industrial buildings, and the area benefits from high quality Georgian and Victorian architecture.

The town's layout largely escaped any radical redevelopment plans in the 20th century and is recognisable in its late 19th century form, that being post completion of the canals and railways.

The urban grain of the town has simplified with plots being fused together and the scale development increasing, but relationship between building, connections and open spaces largely remained, with only a limited number of strategic roads being driven through to open up new opportunities.





2.0 Legislation and planning policy framework

2.1 Legislation

The Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 72(1) of the primary legislation sets out the general duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions in It states that 'in the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.

2.2 The Development Plan

2.2.1 National Planning policy Framework

The UK government's current agenda concerning heritage assets is set out in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) (2012) which addresses heritage alongside the wider policy approach for economic, social and environmental roles to be considered This allows for the planning balance to be more readily appraised and for key issues to be weighted in the sustainability agenda.

Paragraph 128 states that 'local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise'. The characterisation study along with conservation area appraisals and the Walsall Historic Environment Register (HER) (see section 3.3.1.2) comprises the evidence base for decision making for the AAP.

Paragraph 131 goes on to state that 'in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustaining communities including their economic vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

It is important that historic assets continue to play a positive role in the regeneration of the settlements which make up Walsall in order to add value to development and enable the delivery of economic growth.

A fundamental aspect of the document is the assessment of how development impacts on heritage assets. This is appraised through the degree of harm caused and mitigation secured. Paragraph 133 states that 'where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss'. Where less that substantial harm is caused paragraph 134 states that 'this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use'.

The NPPF also suggests through paragraph 127 that 'when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest'.

2.2.2 The Unitary Development Plan

Walsall's Development Plan comprises the Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UPD) and the Black Country Core Strategy.

The current Walsall UDP was formally adopted by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council in March 2005 and reviewed in 2011

following the adoption of the core strategy (see 2.2.3 below). The UDP contains 'saved policies' which are considered consistent with National and other Local Policy.

Heritage policy is primarily set out in Chapter 3 (Environment and Amenity). The main policy of relevance is ENV29 (Conservation Areas) which is a criteria based policy which seeks to allow development that 'preserves or enhances the character and appearance of a conservation area in terms of:

- The degree of loss or alteration to property which makes a positive contribution to the character of the area;
- The impact of any new buildings on the special townscape and landscape features within the area;
- The scale, massing, siting, layout, design or choice of materials used in any new building or structure; and
- The nature of its use and the anticipated level of traffic, parking and other activity that will result.

The policy goes on to confirm that it will resist the loss of buildings that make a positive contribution or development that erodes special features which the council wishes to preserve and enhance.

For the sound implementation of this policy, a detailed conservation area appraisal is required.

In addition, Policy ENV 32 (Design and Development Proposals) specifies the particular significance of design Conservation Areas and visually prominent sites

As the conservation area is multi layered and includes listed buildings and locally listed buildings a number of policies of the UDP are relevant, these include:

- ENV 25 (Archaeology);
- ENV 26 (Industrial Archaeology);
- ENV 27 (Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest):
- ENV 28 (The 'Local List' of Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest);
- ENV 33 (Landscape Design);
- ENV 34 (Public Art);
- ENV 35 (Appearance of Commercial

- Buildings);
- ENV 36 (Posters Hoardings);
- ENV37 (Small Poster Panel Advertisements); and
- ENV38 (Telecommunications Equipment).

2.2.3 The Black Country Core Strategy

The Black Country Core Strategy was adopted in February 2011. Policy CSP4 (Place-making) states that 'all development will be required to demonstrate a clear understanding of the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area and show how proposals make a positive contribution to place-making.

Policy ENV2 (Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness) makes reference to the need to analyse the characteristics of the areas of historic character that make the Black Country distinctive.

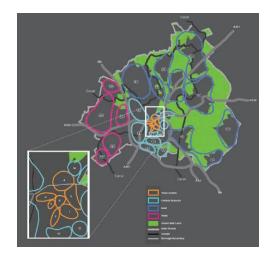
The production of a characterisation study for the town centre AAP area will be a positive step towards the implementation of these policies through the provision of an evidence base identifying the distinctive and characteristic elements of Walsall town centre.

2.3 Other Policy Documents

2.3.1 'Designing Walsall: Supplementary Planning Document

This is the SPD for urban design and supports 'saved' policies ENV32, ENV33 and ENV34 in the UDP. The document was adopted in February 2008 and revised in July 2013.

It looks broadly at issues concerning connections, urban spaces, waterways, buildings, homes, skyline, townscape, green landscape and open space and arts, creativity and the community. The SPD manages these topics through a series of sub areas. This is a broader approach and does not reflect characterisation in the same way as undertaken in this document.



3.0 Methodology

3.1 Context

The NPPF states that 'Local Planning Authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment' (Paragraph 169). This can take a number of forms when assessing an urban area, such as Walsall town centre.

3.1.1 Urban Historic Characterisation

Urban Historic Characterisation (UHC) studies are largely desk-based, making use of existing documents, maps, photographs and other heritage information. The aim is to gain an understanding of how places have developed over time and to identify urban types and character areas. The information derived from such studies can then be used to assist in the protection and enhancement of the local character and distinctiveness of when an area development proposals being are considered.

3.1.2 Historic Area Assessments

English Heritage describe Historic Area Assessments as being a way of defining the character of a place, explaining how it has acquired its present form and evaluating its significance, it states that 'the basis for these judgments is an examination of the physical fabric of a place coupled with the use of historic maps and other documentary sources. Best results will be achieved when of architectural, archaeological and conservation skills can be assembled, but the methods are straightforward and adaptable to local circumstances'.

3.1.3 Conservation Area Appraisals & Management Plans.

The 1990 Act requires the preparation of an evidence base under Section 71 in the designation of a conservation area, it states that from time to time a local planning authority shall 'formulate and publish proposals for the preservation enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas'.

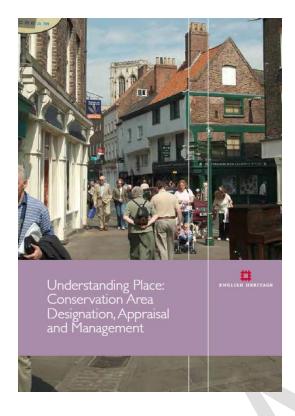
The NPPF takes the need for management plan further; requiring Local Authorities to 'look for opportunities for new development in Conservation Areas ... to ensure or better reveal their significance' (paragraph 137). This places an onus on such appraisals to ensure that heritage play a positive and active role in wider regeneration activity and economic growth and specifically to identify how this is achieved.

Conservation Area appraisals and Management Plans break down conservation areas into their constituent parts through the formation of character Through this process periods of development are considered in conjunction with the inherited building types and then consider, open spaces and urban grain.

Most important in these documents is the drawing out of negative and positive aspects of the conservation area in order to formulate management principles policies.

3.2 Guidance

English Heritage published guidance in March 2011 to advise on methods of gathering such a varied scope of data. 'Understanding Places: Conservation Area Designation. Appraisal and Management' sets out the need to consider location and setting, historic development, architectural quality and built form, open spaces, park, gardens and trees, character zones, boundaries and condition, along with a host of other topics that will apply varying degrees according to the nature of the area.



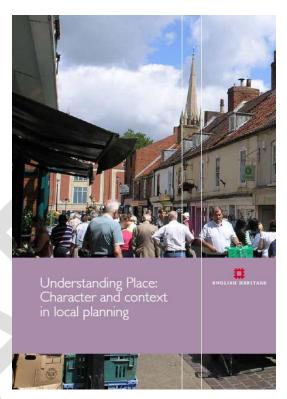
The 2011 guidance cannot be read in isolation and is dependent on other publications that assist in the appraisal of characterisation of place.

In June 2011 English Heritage published 'Understanding Place: Character and context in Local Planning'. This advocated the use of characterisation and the reasons behind why it is undertaken. It draws characterisation out of the predominantly heritage orientated field and places it centrally in the urban design realm.

Characterisation in this document promoted as the key evidence base behind formulation of design and allocation policy. The use of this methodology is promoted through a series of case studies.

The case studies illustrate that each form of characterisation employs methodology and approach in order to capture data that serves the discrete reason behind formulating the document. greatest significance in this instance is the Rugeley Historic Character Assessment that was produced in association with the town centre AAP and the Chester City Centre

produced Characterisation that was specifically to provide the evidence base for the Local; Development Framework and to inform future land-use and conservation policy.

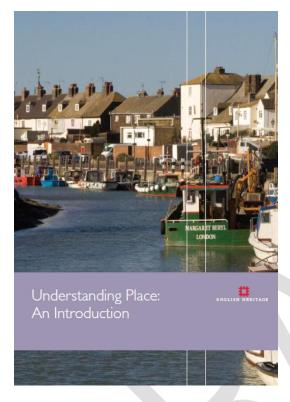


'Understanding Places: An Introduction' (2010) places great weight on the need to use Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC). This approach has been carried out as a programme with the intention of encompassing the whole country and therefore helps to perceive conservation areas as part of a wider landscape and not in isolation with a hard boundary.

Another important publication of value in the undertaking of conservation area appraisals is 'Understanding Places: Historic Area Planning Assessments in а and Development Context'. The publication suggests the methodology of defining character and assessing condition in order to appraise significance.

Historic Area Assessment focuses on the historic built environment includes both buildings and other elements of the landscape that provide their setting such as street and road patterns, or boundary

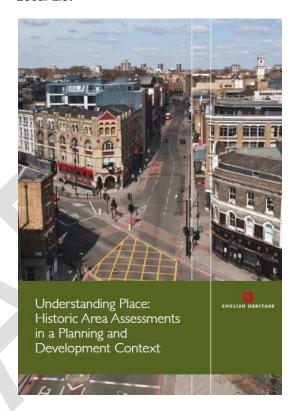
hedges and walls. It also has regard to buried and upstanding archaeological remains. This approach requires observations that look at a place or area as a whole. It provides a rapid methodology of gathering information.



It states that the practical application of such assessments is to enable local planning authorities to identify:

- · the way in which the character of an area can be used to engender a sense of place which can provide a focus for regeneration;
- could which accommodate areas substantial change wholesale or redevelopment;
- areas suitable for adaptive re-use;
- characteristics or features that schemes for re-use should aim to retain or respect:
- · areas where demolition would result in neighbourhoods losing their integrity and therefore becoming more vulnerable;
- · which parts of the historic fabric could be lost without reducing the significance of an area or building;
- · areas where grant-aid or other incentives would be most effective;

- areas where heritage protection is strongest, and areas where new or revised designations are needed;
- · areas where more detailed or contextual research is needed:
- · heritage assets suitable for inclusion in a Local List



A key document in the appraisal and management of the historic environment is English Heritage 'Conservation, Principles, Policy and guidance' (2008).

The document focuses on how weight can be given to the significance of a heritage Four values are considered (1) asset. evidential value, (2) aesthetic value, (3) historical value, and (4) communal value. These strands drawn together substantiate the significance of an asset.

'Understanding Places: Historic Area Assessment, Principles and Practice' advocates Historic Area Assessment (HAA) as an important and practical tool for the informed management of the historic environment, and forms one of a number of approaches to understanding the historic environment at area scale, commonly grouped under the heading 'historic

characterisation'. The approach advocates the evaluation of the historic environment by understanding how the past is encapsulated in today's landscape.

NSERVATION

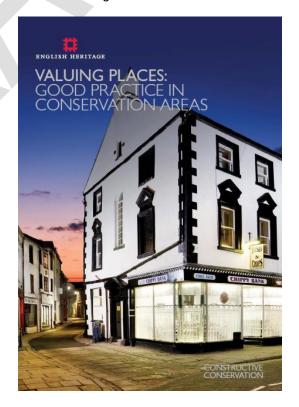




'Valuing' Places: Good Practice Conservation Areas'. The publication refers to 'Constructive conservation' which is the term English Heritage uses to define the protection and adaptation of historic places through active management.

This document is more concerned with the 'opportunities' aspect of the appraisal and the management plan as it is concerned with informed, careful adaptation to historic places so that we can not only reduce the amount of energy expended in creating new development, but also achieve greater energy efficiency, sustaining the utility of historic places into the future.

The first step is to establish general agreement on what elements are significant, and why. The second is to formulate policies that will protect those elements that are of greater significance, and provide guidance. The third is to ensure that when new interventions are made they reinforce local distinctiveness and historic character. Popular support for these approaches, and their firm and consistent application, is essential throughout.



3.3 The Walsall town centre characterisation survey

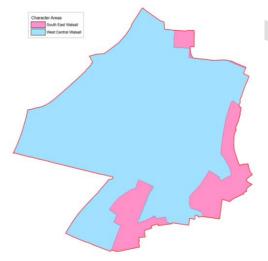
3.3.1 Previous Works Contributing to the Evidence Base

3.3.1.1 The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation was published in 2009.

The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project completed in 2009. It was a desk based project based on mapping and aerial photographs ranging for the 1750s to 2001 and divided the landscape into Broad and Narrow HLC Types based on the dominant land use of each area as interpreted from the 2001 mapping. The HLC Broad Type polygons were analysed by clustering parcels of similar land uses into larger areas, which led to the creation of Character Areas.

The AAP is covered principally by the following two character areas in this study:

- West Central Walsall Character Area (WL05)
- South East Walsall Character Area (WL11)



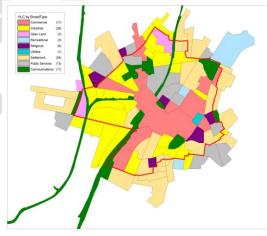
Character areas identified in the AAP area

The scale of the character areas are far more strategic than the scope of the AAP and therefore function as a strategic picture for the town centre and the wider landscape. Further information is available in the Black Country HLC report, available online at http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives /view/blackcountry hlc 2009/

Broadly speaking the study describes Walsall town centre as:

'The Commercial Centre of Walsall is in the south-east of the Character Area with its shops, offices and civic buildings. Although of earlier origin, is largely made up today of post medieval or modern buildings. The shops, public houses and offices in this area belong to a variety of periods, the earliest of which date to the mid/late 18th century and include a shopping arcade dating to 1895-7 as well as late 20th century purpose built shops. To the north is an area of civic buildings including the current Town Hall, dating to 1902-05, a court building of 1831 and the mid/late 20th century civic centre.'

This is a simplification of the original HLC data set which identified 102 HLC Narrow Type parcels in the AAP area.



HLC Broad Types in the AAP area identified by the Black Country HLC Project

The Black Country HLC data is unsuitable for use in the evidence base for the Walsall Area Action Plan as it is based on mapping that is now over 10 years out of date. Additionally, the HLC looked at dominant land use rather than individual building character, which meant that Park Street, Digbeth and High Street were classed as Commercial Core. grouping Victorian Arcade in with the Saddlers Centre and the New Art Gallery.

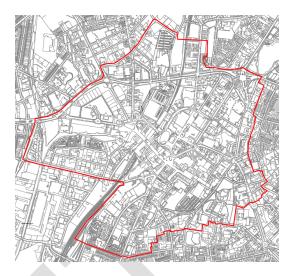
3.3.1.2 The Wolverhampton and Walsall Historic Environment Record

The Wolverhampton and Walsall HER holds records of any archaeological work carried out in the borough as well as information relating to designated sites such as listed buildings, Registered parks and gardens and Scheduled Monuments and un designated sites that have been identified as being of archaeological importance. The HER holds over 280 records relating to the town centre AAP area alone. These are diverse and include a variety of sources such as Find spots, records of historic buildings, and a variety of surveys and excavation reports relating to development sites in the town centre. The HER data is available on line via the Heritage Gateway at http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/ chr/herdetail.aspx?crit=&ctid=93&id=4738

3.3.2 Geographical scope

characterisation study is being undertaken as an evidence base for the Walsall Area Action Plan (AAP). boundary for this correlates to the Unitary Development Plan town centre area and includes a substantial stretch of the towns ring road (along its northern limits), the canal link (to the west), the mediaeval Church Hill (to the east) and Bradford Street, the principal gateway into the town (to the south).

Environmental and design considerations, often cannot be confined to a stringent boundary, and whilst the AAP is aimed at auiding the principles of regeneration and development in the town centre, it will be affected by the immediate areas surround it. This is particularly critical when one considers the Arboretum Junction (where Broadway crosses Lichfield Street) or the Paddocks Hill high rise housing which falls just outside the area, but has a very dominant impact on the townscape characteristics of this south-eastern corner of the AAP.



It has, therefore, been decided that the study area will extend beyond the AAP to form a buffer zone to the principal study area to absorb the significance of the inner suburbs and help inform the complete context of key sites towards the edge of the AAP area. This wider scope is also critical at the time of writing as the final AAP boundary is yet to be determined.

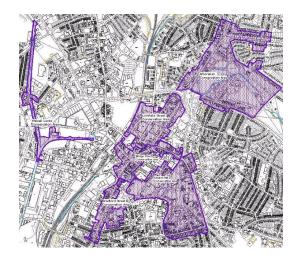
Part of the evidence base for the survey work consists of the five conservation areas that cover a significant tract of the town centre. A large amount of documentation is held on these areas through their 'Appraisals'. This existing wealth of information must be factored into this exercise. The conservation areas are:

- Bradford street:
- Bridge Street:
- Church Hill:
- Lichfield Street; and
- Walsall Locks

These appraisals need to be regularly updated and therefore this characterisation work will feed back into these documents.

As two of the conservation areas (1) Walsall locks, and (2) Church Hill, sit beyond the AAP boundary the study area has been expanded in these areas to take in these conservation areas.

Appendix 1 addresses the conservation areas in greater detail, along referencing to their Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.



3.3.3 Data collection and recording

Within the AAP boundary the study area has been subdivided into 6 principal character areas and 91 sub-character areas. The subcharacter areas are at a scale whereby the Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCA's) categories can be applied.

There sub-character areas consider the predominant characteristics of the area, be it building typology, infrastructure arrangement, huddle of uses of open space.

The survey work comprises written and photographic data gathering that records:

- Building types;
- Connections and urban grain;
- Predominant materials:
- Positive characteristics; and
- Negative characteristics.

It analyses the qualities of the environment in terms of the physical built structure, the activity and the economic viability.

The data is entered into individual gazetteer sheets for each sub-character area and logged under an independent reference number, relating to the principal character area.

Key to the assessment is identification of the nature of the 'place' if this contributes positively or negatively to the town. From this a clear picture can be drawn together on what is an asset worth retaining and the scope and opportunities for change.

3.4 Historic Urban Character Areas

Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCA's)

Predominant character

3.4.1 Residential

There was always historically residential development in the town, although early residential use was always in association with business, either the workshop in the rear yard or the shop downstairs.

RS1: Early 19th century town housing in conjunction with rear workshops

RS2: 19th century terrace housing **RS3:** 19th century villas housing RS4: Early 20th century housing RS5: Post war (1945-70) terraces RS6: Post war (1945-70) tenements **RS7:** Post war (1945-70) high rise **RS8:** Modern housing (1970-90)

RS9: Modern flats (1970-90) RS10: New housing (1990-to date) **RS11:** New flats (1990-to date)

3.4.2 Industrial

Walsall has grown on industry and is essentially an industrial town. Of greatest consequence is the towns association with the leather industry and the way this trade was developed, in small workshops, was very much in character with the wider evolution of industry across the Black Country.

IN1: 19th century warehousing

IN2: 19th century leather workshops

IN3: Early 20th century factories and workshops

IN4: Late 20th century factories and workshops

3.4.3 Retail

All town centres contain a retail element which has changed over the past century. Retail, both through shops and a vibrant street market has operated in the town for over 1,000 years

RE1: Early 19th century shops with accommodation above.

RE2: Late 19th century retail development

RE3: Early 20th century shops **RE4:** Post war (1945-70) shops

RE5: Modern retail parks

RE6: Superstore

3.4.4 Commercial

The commercial uses of the 19th century were predominantly in association with businesses in the area and the industries and trades which existed. From the 20th Century, Walsall saw the development of purely commercial building and activity, particularly during the post war to the modern offices and commercial buildings of today.

C1: 19th century chambers **C2:** Early 20th century offices

C3: Post war (1945-70) office blocks

C4: Modern offices

3.4.5 Transport

A number of forms of transport existing within Walsall which demonstrate its role as a hub for industrial practices. Walsall has a railway, a canal and motorised transport infrastructure.

T1: Transport interchange

T2: Railways T3: Canals T4: Roads

3.4.6 Open spaces

Open spaces are generally publically accessible, although some areas of cleared land are fenced off. Public spaces and parks can be either formally or informally laid out and include features such as art works or memorials. Car parks are generally of mid to late 20th century or later in date and both single and multi storey examples are present. Cleared land is present as the result of the demolition of earlier structures on a site, not necessarily in advance of development, many of these areas are overgrown with scrub vegetation and there may be informal access routes present.

OS1: Public spaces

OS2: Parks **OP3:** Car parking **OP4:** Cleared land

3.4.7 Mixed use

Mixed use buildings are typically more of a modern construction, however there are a number of public and civic mixed use buildings constructed during the 19th Century with a number of 20th century unplanned mixed sui generis uses being evident.

MX1: 19th century mix of civic structures MX2: 20th century unplanned mix of sui

generis uses

3.5 Sensitivity Analysis

A scale of sensitivity is finally applied to each sub character area to indicate its sensitivity to change. This comprises:

1: Very sensitive

Areas of established character, fully developed and comprising buildings, spaces and connections that positively reflect development and evolution. Walsall's Containing few development opportunities.

2: Sensitive

Areas that are fully developed and planned out, that may have opportunity sites within them but have an established dominant scale and character.

3: Neutral

Areas that are developed but lack strength in urban design through poor quality weak connectivity. architecture and Development opportunities may not present themselves, but change could be readily sustained.

4: Not very sensitive

Areas where the townscape has eroded and there is a discrepancy in the relationship between buildings of differing scale and open spaces which are unplanned and disconnected.

5: Not sensitive

Areas that have extensively lost all building and unplanned open spaces have come about through clearance and loss of building and or historic streets and spaces.

3.6 Limitations

The survey work is subject to two key limitations. Firstly, the way that character areas and sub character areas are formed could be done in a number of ways and it could easily be reconfigured to include buildings into adjacent sub-areas. Whilst reorganisation of boundaries can be fluid,

the conclusions on the negative and positive environments within the town are fixed and therefore this limitation is not significant.

The second factor concerns change. Walsall is currently undergoing renaissance in retail and leisure and a number of major planning applications are either extant, in the planning process or on site. The town therefore is in a state of transition and this has affected the survey work, which can only assess the current condition of the town. Where development is committed, this is factored into the appraisal, where it is not, it is not acknowledged, although development may progress after publication.

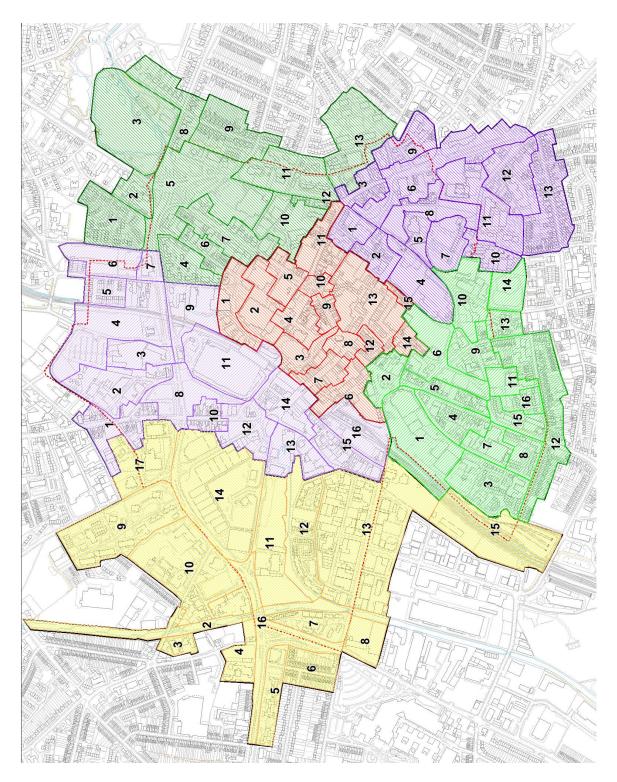
Characterisation work is only effective if reviewed and therefore the opportunity to update survey work will allow for new development in the town to be factored in at a future date, albeit that policies may have been formulated in response to a site.

3.4.1 Alterations to AAP boundary

Prior to the completion of this report the proposed AAP boundary was altered to include an area to the north of the town centre on Portland Street and North Street which needs assessing in terms of characterisation, sensitivity and potential opportunities and constraints. A further area to the south of the town centre has been removed from the AAP but is covered by this characterisation study. The altered boundary is shown in blue on the map below.



Sub-Character Areas Walsall Town Centre



PART II: CHARACTERISATION IN WALSALL



4.0 Summary of special interest

4.1 An overview of Walsall town centre

Archaeological remains and references to Walsall as a settlement dates back to the 11th Century, with the settlement based along High Street/ Digbeth and Peal and Rushall Streets. From the 16th to the 18th Century the proximity and access to coal, ironstone and limestone enabled the lorinery trades to flourish with the making of bits, stirrups, buckles and spurs. Much of Walsall's industry developed out of the requirements of horse transport, the production of horse furniture being followed by leather-working and rope-making.

Along with the development of these industries, Walsall experienced exponential growth in population, associated with new infrastructure. Its importance during the industrial revolution enabled a canal and wharf to be constructed, as well as a railway station into the town centre.

4.1.1 Buildings

The building stock is reflective of all eras of Walsall's development from the mediaeval period with archaeological finds to the predominant building stock of the Victorian and Georgian eras which demonstrate its growth during the industrial revolution.

There are a mix of building types from high status Victorian and Georgian town houses, to rows of roads with more traditional Victorian worker's cottages along with ancillary buildings such as workshops. Although there have always been ecclesiastical buildings, over the past 200 years a number of additional places of worship were constructed, as well as public and civic buildings. A number of warehouse and factory buildings are still extant which have an association with the lorinery trades and the leather industry. A number of buildings were demolished in the first half of the 20th Century as a result of slum clearance and social housing constructed in its place. Today Wallsall maintains much of historic interest alongside modern landmark buildings such as the art gallery.

4.1.2 Connections and urban gain

The historic core and street layout is still evident in today's street layout, with squares such as the junction of Bridge Street, Bradford Place, Park Street and Digbeth Street forming part of the market place, which has been the case for hundreds of years.

Other infrastructure such as the ring road has caused an amount of fragmentation within the town centre, in some areas causing a disproportionate relationship between the streets and the association of the buildings around them.

Generally movement comprises strong linear east to west routes, with the need to improve connections from the south to the town centre.

4.1.3 Uses

The predominant uses of the town centre are retail and residential around the core of the High St. with commercial buildings and residential uses towards the outskirts of the centre. There remains some industrial uses, and a number of buildings and land which is derelict and in need of regeneration. There have been recent improvements to leisure and education with the construction of the art gallery and associated regeneration, as well as the construction of a college

4.1.4 Predominant materials

Much of the traditional historic building stock is made of the local vernacular of red clay bricks with timber windows and welsh slates for rooves. Some buildings exhibit iron windows and fittings which were a common feature during the industrial revolution and represent's Walsalls position in the metal manufacturing trades.

The building stock of today exhibits much larger and taller buildings, predominantly with newer concrete construction methods and cladding to add interest to the building.

4.1.5 Positive characteristics

The Town Centre has retained much of its earlier fabric, particularly from the Georgian and Victorian eras. This enables the town's role and function during the industrial revolution to be read through the remaining warehouses, factories, and shops as well as the high status villas and townhouses and worker's cottages.

The adaption to different forms of transport, from horse and car, to canal, to railways to motorised transport, along with their associated buildings and infrastructure are also evident within the town.

4.1.6 Negative characteristics

There are a number of historic buildings within the town centre which are in a derelict or poor state of repair with a risk of fabric being lost altogether. These issues result from fragmented/ absentee ownership, lack of maintenance, unsympathetic additions and alterations.

In some areas there is a fragmentation of relationship to street forms which some historic buildings left isolated as a result of new roads and building schemes which remove the historic buildings relationship from its surrounding context.

4.2 Character Areas

The Town Centre has been broken down into 6 character areas which analyse the individual characteristics of each area and their significance and sensitivity for change. The areas are as follows:

Canal Link:

Town end;

Civic centre:

Chuckery and Arboretum:

Church hill:

Bradford Street

Each of the character areas are then split up into smaller sub-areas which allows an assessment to be undertaken on the area's building types, connections, urban grain, uses, materials, positive and negative characteristics, the significance of the area and its sensitivity to change.