

APPENDIX 1

BISHOP'S CASTLE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

BISHOP'S CASTLE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2019-2038

Regulation 14 Draft

January 2022

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Introduction

1. This Character Assessment was undertaken as part of the continuous updating of the Bishop's Castle Town Plan (BCTP), a Community Led Plan which was adopted by the Town Council in 2016. Its intention is also to inform policies of the nascent Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) which was commissioned by the Town Council and commenced in February 2019.
2. The two plans sit side by side. The BCTP covers a wide range of topics including transport and the environment whereas the NDP relates to specific planning matters only. Both plans however are recognised by the Localism Act of 2011 and by Shropshire Council's Development Plan and Core Strategy Policies as having a key role in relation to development proposals.
3. At the 14 February 2019 community meeting, where the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan Vision and policy themes were agreed, it was decided that the NDP should contain a policy on design that would apply to future development in the town centre and Conservation Area.
4. A review of Shropshire Council's Development Plan policies reveals that the NDP could add value to existing policies. The Development Plan consists of the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (adopted 17 December 2015) and the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan (March 2011).
5. SAMDev MD2¹ requires development to respond positively to local design aspirations, wherever possible, both in terms of visual appearance and how a place functions, as set out in Community Led Plans, Town or Village Design Statements, Neighbourhood Plans and Place Plans.
6. SAMDev MD2 also requires development to contribute to and respect locally distinctive or valued character and existing amenity value by:
 - i. Responding appropriately to the form and layout of existing development and the way it functions, including mixture of uses, streetscape, building heights and lines, scale, density, plot sizes and local patterns of movement;
 - ii. Reflecting locally characteristic architectural design and details, such as building materials, form, colour and texture of detailing, taking account of their scale and proportion;
 - iii. Protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic context and character of heritage assets, their significance and setting, in accordance with MD13; and

¹ Shropshire Council's Local Plan is a collection of various planning policy documents including the (SAMDev) Adopted Plan 2015 and the Shropshire Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy March 2011. MD2, 12 and 13; CS6 and S2 (all of which are referred to in this Introduction) are Management of Development (MD) and Core Strategy (CS) Policies that are set out and explained in these two documents.

- iv. Enhancing, incorporating or recreating natural assets in accordance with MD12.
- 7. SAMDev MD13 protects, conserves and sympathetically enhances heritage assets. The explanatory notes state in 3.132 that heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes that merit consideration as part of the planning process. The term includes all designated and non-designated assets. Designated assets comprise Listed Building and Conservation Areas and Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- 8. The explanatory text in para 4.14 states that the town lies to the west of the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and much of the remainder of the Bishop's Castle area is within this nationally designated landscape. The town's medieval settlement pattern with its narrow roads means that vehicular access is often difficult. Much of the town centre lies within a Conservation Area, there are a large number of listed buildings and the castle site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 9. SAMDev CS6 protects, restores, conserves and enhances the natural, built and historic environment and is appropriate in scale, density, pattern and design taking into account the local context and character, and those features which contribute to local character, having regard to national and local design guidance, landscape character assessments and ecological strategies where appropriate.
- 10. SAMDev S2 sets out the planning framework for Bishop's Castle. The extent of the town centre for retail purposes is identified on the policies map.
- 11. **Figure 1** is an extract of the SAMDev maps showing the location of the Scheduled Ancient Monument, the town centre and the conservation area.

FIGURE 1: ADOPTED POLICIES MAP FOR BISHOP'S CASTLE, SAMDEV, S2-BISHOP'S CASTLE



Source: SAMDev maps,
S2-Bishop's Castle

12. NPPF² para 28 states that non-strategic policies in neighbourhood plans should be used to set out more detailed policies for specific areas. Para. 29 states that neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development. Para. 124 states that design is a key aspect of sustainable development: being clear about design expectations and how these will be tested is essential for achieving this.
13. NPPF para 200 states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas to enhance or better reveal their significance and proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably. However, para 201 states that not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance.
14. This Character Assessment responds to the policies in the Development Plan and the NPPF by providing detailed and proportionate evidence upon which to base design policies in the NDP. It also identifies issues that have a significant, detrimental effect on the character of the Conservation Area and which will need to be addressed if the Conservation Area is to be protected.

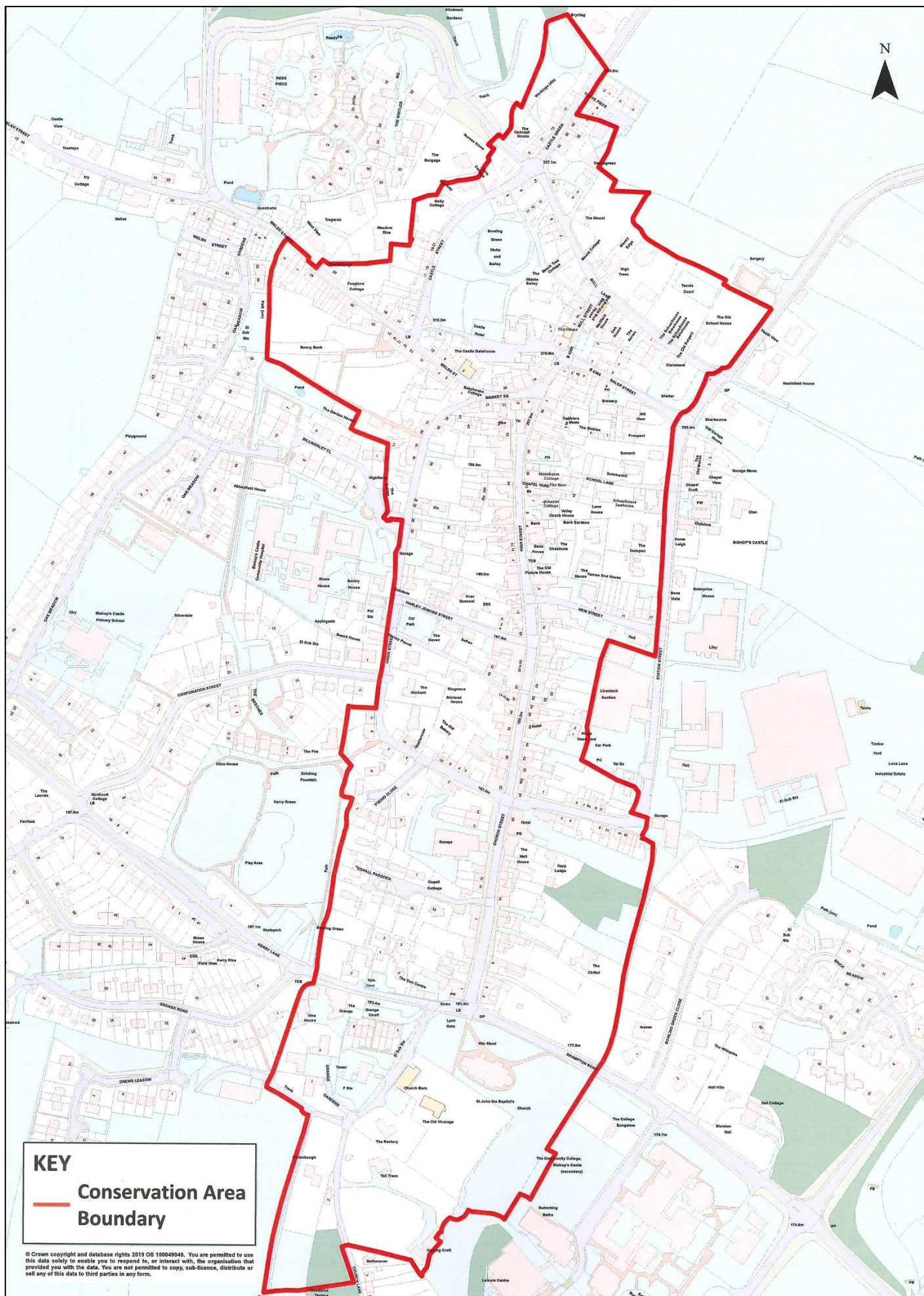
Methodology

15. A Steering Group was established to deliver the NDP. It assembled a team of local people to undertake the detailed assessments which underpin this Conservation Area Character Assessment.
16. The assessment team prepared the assessment and this was then assessed against the policies in the Development Plan by Andrea Pellegram MRTPI who has prepared this Conservation Area Character Assessment based on that foundation.
17. The Conservation Area (see Figure 2 on page 6) constitutes not only the historic part of Bishop's Castle but also its current active town centre. The area was divided into nine zones. Each one was surveyed to assess its character as reflected in the buildings and spaces. The assessment is based on recognised model toolkits including the Oxford Character Assessment and the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty toolkits.
18. The nine zone assessments are enclosed in the **Appendix** to this document together with further details of the methodology. The Appendix also provides critical, up to date information on the Local Heritage Assets List which forms part of Shropshire Council's Heritage Environment Record. This list is contained on pages 5 to 9 of Shropshire Council's CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL BISHOP'S CASTLE document which was last updated in 2012 and still has several local list property and site references that are now inaccurate and not fit for purpose.

² The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It was first published in March 2012 and last updated in February 2019

19. The purpose of the assessment is to capture the key components of the town's character and to identify: characteristics that should be protected/conserved; opportunities for change and/or development; and locations that are or could be sensitive to development or change. In this way the essential character of Bishop's Castle can be maintained for the future.

FIGURE 2: THE CONSERVATION AREA



The Character of Bishop's Castle Conservation Area and Town Centre

20. The character of Bishop's Castle comprises two components: elements that are visibly present and elements that impact on the physical environment. Both elements are reflected in some way in all nine zonal assessments.

Visible characteristics

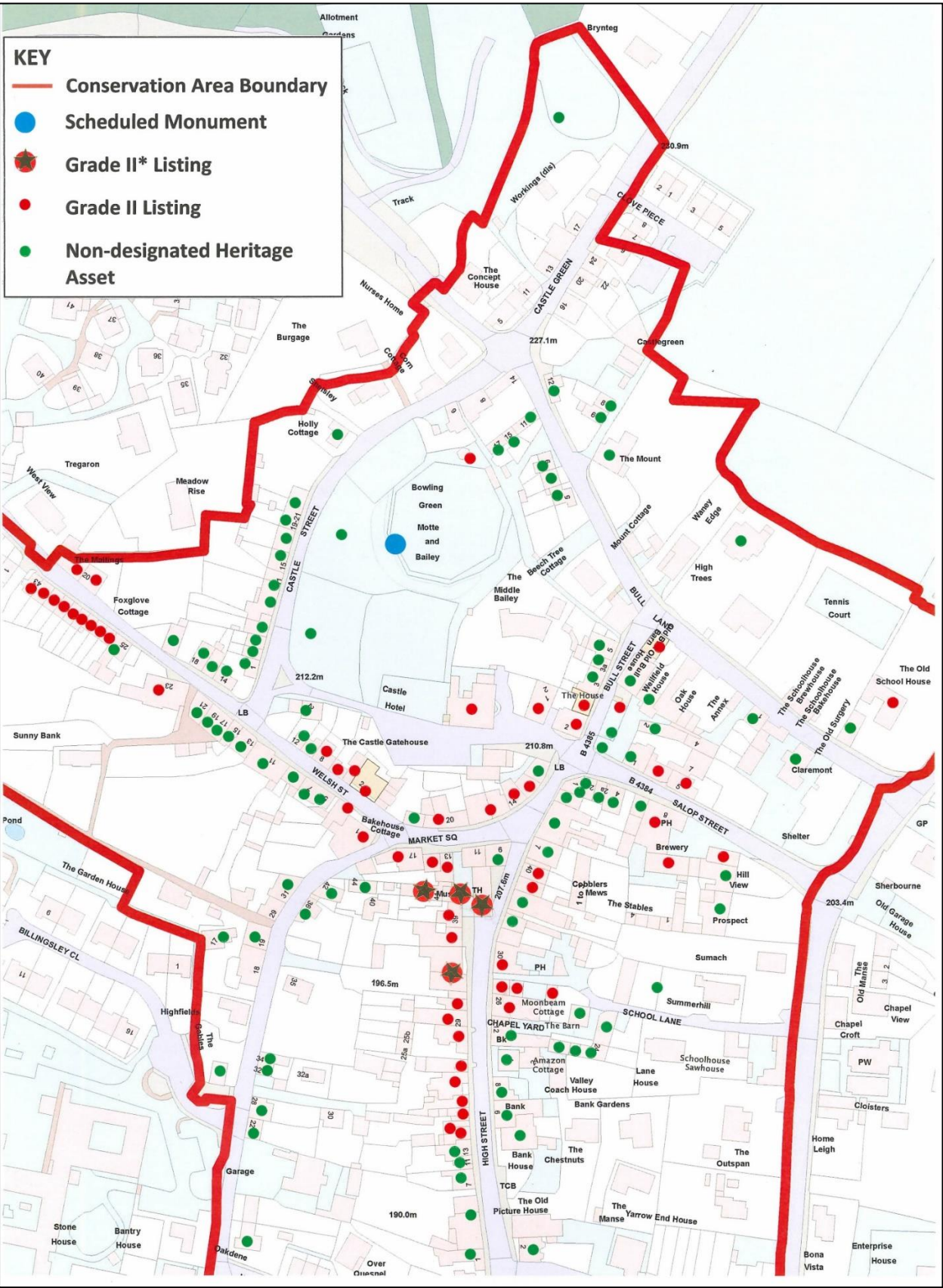
History

21. The history of the town is a pre-eminent feature of the entire Conservation Area starting in the early 1100s after the stone Castle was built by the Bishops of Hereford between 1085 and 1100 as a defence against the Welsh. The town itself was established in 1127 and by 1285 there were 46 burgage plots on either side of a line between the castle at the top of the hill and the site of the church at the bottom. This line subsequently became what is now High Street and Church Street. These streets, and those now running parallel to them, containing the original burgage plots, now form the heart of the Conservation Area and the town.
22. For 800 years Welsh drovers brought cattle and sheep to market in Bishop's Castle and in 1203 King John granted the town a charter to hold markets. This brought people and livestock into the town from both England and Wales. The wool economy thrived resulting in a merchant class that built properties to reflect their wealth. Some of these properties remain as does the cattle market, now at the edge of the Conservation Area and regular auctions of sheep and cattle still bring people into the town.
23. In 1573, Elizabeth I granted a second charter which enabled Bishop's Castle to become a self-governing borough with a commercial and social centre that would serve the surrounding rural area. This was the start of the town's significance as both an economic and political power base. It was strengthened even further by another charter in 1617 bestowed by King James I.
24. Records indicate that a Town Hall existed from at least 1615 but the current Town Hall was constructed in the 18th century, complete with a jail and stocks in front. Recently renovated it now provides a focal point on the High Street. The window tax was introduced in 1696 and lasted until 1851. It was a graded levy on premises containing glazed windows, a sign of wealth. It led to owners bricking up window apertures to reduce the amount of tax they would be eligible for. Some buildings still retain the evidence today.
25. The significance of the wealth and importance of the merchant classes, politicians and landowners cannot be underestimated. From the mid-18th century until the early 1900s Clive of India and his descendants owned land and property in and around the town. In the early 1800s Bishop's Castle became a 'rotten borough' returning 2 MPs and thus carrying an unlikely level of influence for a small town of this size.

26. In the Victorian era, further investment took place and in 1866 a railway brought added commercial benefits. Records show that agricultural merchants travelling by rail from Craven Arms to the markets in Bishop's Castle would return with large quantities of produce bought from Bishop's Castle retailers for supply to hotels in Craven Arms. The railway also brought direct investment in the town's fabric with nine railway cottages built by the railway company in Welsh Street to house their employees. The railway closed in 1935 when the row of cottages was taken over by a local business E. Beddoes & Sons. Their future was thus secured. The cottages remain today and are Grade II Listed buildings.
27. The town's history has determined its basic infrastructure and created within its Conservation Area core many significant properties and edifices. Shropshire Council's Historic Environment Record lists 267 heritage assets, including 1 Scheduled Monument, 5 Grade II* Listed properties and 100 Grade II Listed premises (see Figures 3 and 4 on pages 9 and 10). The Record also lists 161 non-designated assets (the Locally Listed Heritage Assets), 141 of which are also identified in Figures 3 and 4). Nine of the remaining twenty assets are believed to have been absorbed into adjoining properties or have been lost. The location of the remaining eleven is unclear. A detailed, annotated list of all 267 assets is provided in the Character Assessment Appendix.
28. The incidence of historical assets is extremely significant in all but two of the zones. In zones 2, 3, 5 and 6 it is the defining feature of the physical appearance. In zones 5 and 6 respectively, 95% and 90% of the street frontage properties are heritage assets. In zones 2 and 3 respectively, 94% and 91% of premises in the survey area are heritage assets. In zone 1, whilst none of the properties in Castle Green have heritage status, 79% of premises elsewhere in the zone are heritage assets. In addition, the prominent former castle site is a Scheduled Monument with a Grade II Listed pavilion adjacent to it. Whilst only 46% of the properties in zone 7 have heritage status, they are clustered in three separate locations along the Union Street carriageway providing small oases of historic character. In zone 8 which lies at the perimeter of the Conservation Area, the heritage assets are all associated with the church. These include 11 Grade II listed assets (the majority in the churchyard) and 1 Grade II* edifice (the Church). There are no heritage assets in zone 4 and only 1 in zone 9.
29. The surveys revealed that whilst over the years many properties have been modified and/or renovated they are still recognisable from these earlier times and continue to reflect the town's heritage. Also, just as previous eras have imparted unique styles, so 20th and 21st century adaptations have continued to do the same, providing another layer to the town's historic character.
30. However, the historic infrastructure of this 12th century town which by and large remains intact, presents a difficult issue – how best to accommodate the 21st century movement of people and goods by car on routes that were not designed for motorised traffic or the levels of car ownership that exists today. In this respect the

surveys show that there has been a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area in every zone.

FIGURE 3: HERITAGE ASSETS – CONSERVATION AREA north



KEY

- Conservation Area Boundary
- Grade II* Listing
- Grade II Listing
- Non-designated Heritage Asset

The map displays the following locations and features:

- Streets:** Union Street, Church Street, Brampton Road, New Street, Station Street, Sefton Road, and various closes and lanes.
- Buildings and Landmarks:** The Old Bakery, The Malt House, Harp Lodge, The Chittol, The Gen Centre, The Grange, The Vine House, The Tower, F Sta, Church Barn, The Old Vicarage, St John the Baptist's Church, War Meml, Sinks, Lych Gate, The Gen Centre, The Grange, The Vine House, The Tower, F Sta, Church Barn, The Old Vicarage.
- Heritage Assets:** Numerous Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings are marked with red dots, and non-designated heritage assets are marked with green dots.
- Other Features:** The Sefton Lighthouse, Sefton Lighthouse Museum, and various public facilities like the PC, Tel Ex, and Garage.

Integral connection to the surrounding landscape

31. Bishop's Castle sits in a bowl on the side of a valley with hills close around it on three sides and on the fourth, across the valley is Oakeley Mynd, beyond which is the Precambrian Long Mynd, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Views of this landscape are significant from within every zone surveyed and wherever you walk at the edge of the town the hills are an immediate presence. They are criss-crossed with footpaths that are used on a daily basis by residents of the town and which also bring many visitors who are vital to the local tourism economy.
32. The surveys show that from within the town there is a constant reminder of the rural landscape. Trees are visible almost everywhere either above the roofline or in spaces or glimpsed views through gaps in the building line, softening the townscape even where it is primarily urban in nature and providing a subliminal reminder of the rural surroundings. Stone walls are prevalent and often feature hedges and shrubs immediately above or plants creeping in their crevices. Pockets of vegetation, both planted and wild, on or at the edge of paved surfaces provide opportunities for insects, small mammals and nesting birds. Properties both old and new include safe nesting for swifts and other birds either in crevices or nesting boxes that have been placed on the walls and under the eaves of buildings.
33. Historic links with agriculture and animals are evidenced by several photographic records of cattle and horse sales along the carriage way of Church Street and High Street as well as on the forecourt of the Castle Hotel. An image from 1897 shows the cattle pens behind the pavement opposite Harp House on Church Street. The southern sections of Union Street and Station Street were originally called Pig Fair and Horse Fair, respectively. The agricultural connection remains with the functioning cattle market that abuts the Conservation Area on Station Street. As this also provides a large car park for use whenever the market is not taking place it too reinforces the underlying nature of the town's importance to its rural hinterland.
34. Tourism is a vital part of the economy, especially walking tourism. The town has two hotels with accommodation as well as guesthouses and properties let out through Airbnb. A short walk from the town centre is a camp site which also includes cabins and a bunkhouse. An annual Walking Festival held over several days in early summer provides guided walks for both day and long stay visitors. The 200 mile plus long-distance footpath, the Shropshire Way bisects the heart of the town, travelling through 5 survey zones and along 8 of the main streets: Castle Green; Bull Lane; Bull Street; Market Square; High Street; Church Street; Church Lane and Field Lane.
35. This footpath attracts many walkers throughout the year both individuals and large and small groups, including fundraising events such as the 'Shropshire Way 80K', a spring walk for around 100 people who must pass through the town. An information panel at the Church Lane junction describes the Kerry ridgeway and other footpaths that link with and are accessible from the Shropshire Way. The zone 8 survey reveals that this is not a relaxing place to stop to absorb the information.

Common architectural features within the built environment of the Conservation Area

36. The Conservation Area is characterised throughout by a mix of building styles and periods within any one area.
37. The materials that are common to most zones are: stone, some of which is believed to have originated from the original castle constructions; timber frame; red brick; painted render; painted brick; mixed materials in a single fascia including red brick mixed with stone, timber or painted render; or timber with stone or painted render.
38. Building facades are commonly decorated with cast or wrought iron details along windows or even at roof level. Decorative wrought iron fencing and gateways are also prevalent. Their significance is reflected by two properties in Welsh Street, both of which are Grade II Listed buildings and in both cases the stone railings are also separately Listed. Pilasters and pediments adorn doorways with decorative lintels above windows or sharp finials and scalloped tiles. Stone boundary walls are also frequently observed. Rendered buildings are painted mostly in muted colours or variations of off-white but are interspersed with bright, strong, bold colour. Some include murals that provide a story in themselves.
39. Variations in height and alignment of buildings and roofs, some of which are enhanced by gabled dormer windows, give an intricate feel to most areas. Staggered facias and footprints and angles and corners prevail, sometimes with narrow passages between buildings enabling glimpsed views of intricate spaces that combine with the buildings to provide hints of what might lie behind.

Elements that impact the environment

Vitality and adaption to change

40. All nine surveys give testament to the vitality of the economic, social, cultural and civic life of the town throughout its history. They illustrate its ability to adapt its buildings and spaces to accommodate change and to conserve its historic heart without over manicuring it. In the process, the town maintains its friendly, inviting and informal atmosphere. Records contained in the Heritage Resource Centre on Chapel Yard provide further documentation of both its vibrant character and the changes that have occurred over time within the town and its community.
41. Both vitality and change are reflected in the town today. The commercial centre of Market Square, High Street and the northern end of Church Street remains despite the current demise of the retail sector nationally as a result of trends in internet shopping even for groceries. Many buildings retain their historic shop frontages and even those that have been adapted to residential or other uses frequently reveal their past function, even if only in details.

42. Elsewhere historic functions are less evident but the grandeur of the converted property remains and is enhanced. For example, the former Black Lion pub in Welsh Street (Zone 3) was converted to residential use and was combined with an adjoining property. The grand, porticoed entrance and elegant railings of the pub remain but, save for the pub trail plaque on the wall there is now little to suggest that part of the extended residence was from 1762 until the 1990s a public house.
43. The vibrancy and uniqueness of the town are also reflected in those properties on which murals have been painted. These have become an iconic feature of the town, much commented on by both residents and visitors alike. They provide an interpretation of modern styles and decorative embellishments on a par with the wrought iron ornamentation of the Victorian era.
44. Another example of the town's vitality is in the number of public houses that are currently operating. This also reflects a continuum throughout the town's history. Records show that since 1642 there have been 46 pubs in the town, 40 of them located either along the main spine road or on Market Square, Salop Street and Bull Street. All are celebrated in a book and a Pub Trail that includes a plaque on all properties that are or once were pubs.
45. The national decline of the pub trade in recent years is well documented yet 6 pubs remain in Bishop's Castle today. All have been continuously licenced, two since 1642; two since the 1700s; and, more recently, two since 1832. Two of them operate real ale breweries on site. The Three Tuns is a nationally renowned pub and brewery (now separately owned and managed) which has been brewing beer since receiving its licence in 1642. All six pubs participate in a longstanding annual Beer Festival that brings visitors to the town from all over the country, many of whom return year after year.
46. Festivals represent another element of the town's vibrant character. They continue the long history of social, economic and civic gatherings experienced through the markets, fairs, processions and celebrations down the years. Spring and summer are the festival seasons, some of which cover several days. They include the Real Ale and Michaelmas Festivals which attract visitors from across the country. The latter comprises street theatre, live music, dance, singing workshops, circus acts, steam engines, a lantern procession and local produce and craft stalls. The Arts Festival exhibits and promotes the work of numerous local artists, and Party in the Park is a day-long music festival organised by AMP, the About Music Project which aims to promote and encourage local, mainly young musicians. These are just a few. All bring visitors to the town, many of whom return and some of whom settle permanently. All raise the profile of the town far and wide, helping to sustain it for the future.
47. The dynamic nature of the town across all aspects of life continues to be reflected in its physical surroundings. Also evidenced in the surveys is the way the environment has been and continues to be adapted to meet the needs and demands of 21st century

living whilst at the same time respecting and acknowledging the history that has made the town what it is.

‘Punching above its weight’

48. Bishop’s Castle is a very small town. It lies in a remote rural area and has not expanded much beyond the footprint of the original ‘planted town’ of Norman times. Unsurprisingly, with a population of less than 2,000 it is frequently referred to as a village by visitors. Yet, despite its size and rural isolation it boasts: a theatre; swimming pool; sports centre; hospital; medical and dental practices; two schools; a fire service; cricket, football, rugby and tennis clubs and facilities; a library; IT centre; Town Council and active Town Hall; and various venues for social event hire.
49. It has numerous and varied active community groups providing support and opportunities over a variety of fields from social care to the environment, the arts and cultural issues. Its Town Council has declared a Climate Emergency and asked the Community Partnership, which is responsible for the Community Led Town Plan, to draw up a Climate Action Plan. It is hoped that this will be reflected in the Shropshire Council Local Plan.
50. Since the 1960s, the town has been a destination for internationally famous actors of stage and screen, as well as writers and musicians some of whom still perform locally from time to time. Precisely because of its quirky, vibrant nature and its interesting history, including its time as a rotten borough, the town remains a centre of opportunity for both its residents and visitors despite its remote location at the foot of the Welsh hills.

Key Findings of the Survey

51. All of the above-mentioned elements that combined create the town’s character are visibly reflected in the town’s topography today. The surveys record the physical characteristics that define the nature of each zone and allocate a ‘score’ in a range of Very Negative **VN**; Negative **N**; Neutral **0**; Positive **P**; Very Positive **VP**. The tables below identify for each zone, the % share of all stated evaluations³ that are positive and negative scores.
52. Positive valuations were by far the most common in all zones. They averaged 75.4% and ranged between 59.3% and 87.6% of all scores that were given in the zone.

³ To avoid double counting, where a ranking was allocated to a characteristic in more than one section of the survey without any change of circumstance to indicate a separate ranking was relevant to this assessment, only the initial ranking was included in the above figures.

POSITIVE SCORES AS A % SHARE OF ALL SCORES IN EACH ZONE									
SCORE CATAGORY	ZONE 1 %	ZONE 2 %	ZONE 3 %	ZONE 4 %	ZONE 5 %	ZONE 6 %	ZONE 7 %	ZONE 8 %	ZONE 9 %
Positive	33.3	34.8	39.1	45.8	25.3	67.4	56.6	52.5	46.4
Very Positive	44.4	42.1	31.0	13.6	48.2	20.2	21.3	27.9	28.6
All Positive	77.7	76.8	70.1	59.3	73.5	87.6	77.9	80.3	75.0
All Scores	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The most commonly cited positive characteristics were:

The presence of views out into the surrounding landscape.	Referenced in every zone
The significance of trees and vegetation within the zone – this included creating a sense of tranquillity, connection with the natural environment, softening the urban landscape and providing opportunities for insects, small mammals and nesting birds.	Referenced in every zone
The presence of significant buildings of architectural and/or historical value.	Referenced in every zone
An open feel to the street scape even when it was essentially hard and enclosed – reasons given included the impact of the sky, a long-distance view, gaps in the façade and visible vegetation.	Referenced in every zone
Glimpsed views, ‘hidden’ tracks and intricate spaces	Referenced in every zone
A sense of history	Referenced in every zone
A harmonious mix of building styles, facades and materials	Referenced in 8 zones: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Intricate rooflines and staggered frontages	Referenced in 8 zones: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
The presence of stone walling usually accompanied by hedging	Referenced in 8 zones: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Plant pots and baskets, decorating building frontages	Referenced in 6 zones: 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9
Use of wrought iron work as a decorative and/or functional element	Referenced in 6 zones: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
The significance of burgage plots both to the spatial arrangement of buildings and to an understanding of the history of the location	Referenced in 6 zones: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
Painted murals on building facades – a modern day, decorative celebration of the town’s character	Referenced in 5 zones: 1, 2, 6, 7, 8
Metal sculptures of a local artist decorating buildings and their spaces and celebrating an important element of local culture.	Referenced on 6 occasions. Occurs in 5 zones: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

53. There were few commonly referenced negative valuations. Negative scores averaged 24.6% of all scores recorded and comprised between 12.4% and 40.7% of all scores that were given in the zone, far less than the positive scores.

NEGATIVE SCORES AS A % SHARE OF ALL SCORES IN EACH ZONE									
SCORE CATAGORY	ZONE 1 %	ZONE 2 %	ZONE 3 %	ZONE 4 %	ZONE 5 %	ZONE 6 %	ZONE 7 %	ZONE 8 %	ZONE 9 %
Negative	16.7	11.6	24.1	35.6	15.7	9.0	11.8	9.8	17.9
Very Negative	5.5	11.6	5.7	5.1	10.8	3.4	10.3	9.8	7.1
All Negative	22.2	23.2	29.9	40.7	26.5	12.4	22.1	19.7	25.0
All Scores	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

54. Two commonly quoted negative features were grit bins and telegraph poles and wires. These however were seen as a 'necessary evil' about which little could probably be done. Whilst street furniture and neglected properties also had a negative impact in several zones their incidence within each zone was not high.
55. Most of the negative ratings that impacted on the character of the zones relate to the competition between traffic, parked cars and the needs of pedestrians. The narrowness of the ancient streets that continue to provide the footprint of the Conservation Area appears to be the significant contributing factor to the problem.
56. Accommodating both moving and parked, commercial and private vehicles is a requirement in a centre that combines both commercial and residential properties. This is accepted as a 'necessary evil' to be managed. Whilst both moving and parked cars impact the ambience, safety and visual experience of streets in parts of all zones, in six of the zones (nos. 2; 3; 5; 6; 8 and 9) there are very significant traffic/pedestrian conflict issues. These relate to:
- The Conservation Area streets, out of necessity, being used by both commercial and residential traffic, travelling to and from the A488 and B4385 to gain access to commercial and residential properties within the Conservation Area as well as to the south, west and north of it. There are no other main roads into the town.
 - The carriageway frequently being used as a shared space between large commercial vehicles, cars, both parked and moving and pedestrians.
 - The narrowness of the carriageway being exacerbated by building frontages immediately abutting the carriageway itself or, where they exist, a narrow roadside pavement. Large commercial lorries have little room to manoeuvre.
 - Potentially dangerous situations at junctions with poor sightlines and/or restricted space to manoeuvre either because of the adjoining building profile or vehicular occupation of the carriageway by other road users.
 - The combined conflicts when a two-way traffic flow becomes restricted to one way by a string of parked vehicles on the edge of the narrow carriageway and/or on the pavement. Traffic enters from both ends of the street with no place to pass and pedestrians are forced to also use the carriageway.

The most commonly cited negative characteristics were:

Impact of traffic on pedestrians and on the ambience of the street	Referenced on 13 occasions. Occurs in every zone.
Problematic Parking	Referenced on 18 occasions. Occurs in 8 zones: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9
Telegraph poles and wires across the sky.	Referenced on 9 occasions. Occurs in 8 zones: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9
Untidy, cluttered or badly located street furniture, including grit bins.	Referenced on 11 occasions. Occurs in 7 zones: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8
Neglected or inappropriately renovated properties	Referenced in 7 zones: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Refuse bins	Referenced on 7 occasions. Occurs in 4 zones: 2, 5, 7, 8

The Future: Continued conservation and opportunities for change

57. The key positive and negative features that have been identified in the surveys are all relevant to the future conservation, enhancement and protection of the Conservation Area. These are recognised objectives of historic England, the NPPF and core planning policies of Shropshire Council. The following sections include actions to ensure continued realisation of these objectives.

Conserving the history

58. History is everywhere within the Conservation Area, visible in the former tracks that led into the town from the west and then down the hill from the promontory on which the castle was built to the river Pennel and the church below; tracks that became surfaced roads over time but were still constricted by the topography and the historic edifices that lined their edges. Prolific too are the historic buildings and sites, 267 of which have been recorded as heritage assets. Some buildings date from as far back as the 16th century, continuing through the Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian eras and displaying typical architectural features of the time.
59. Whilst, the 106 nationally designated assets are individually protected by strict planning conditions, the local listing of the 161 non-designated assets does not provide them with any additional planning protections. Nevertheless, their historic relevance is recognised. On the Locally Listed Heritage Assets page of Historic England's website⁴, it states "the fact that a building or site is on a local list means that

⁴ www.historicengland.org.uk

its conservation as a heritage asset is an objective of the NPPF and a material consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application”

60. It goes on to say that local planning authorities “are obliged to consider the positive contribution that conserving such heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality”. Shropshire Council’s policies MD13 and CS6 (ref. Footnote 1, page 3) and Development Management Policy DP24 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment⁵ also specifically address the need to protect historic assets and their settings, both designated and non-designated. These policies are defined in the context of planning applications for development. However, if the objectives of Historic England, the NPPF and Shropshire Council’s policies are to be realised, the principle of the need to conserve and protect the historical assets extends beyond its application to the impact on them of individual planning applications.
61. The majority of the 267 heritage assets sit at the edge of the carriageway along Bull Street, Salop Street, Castle Street, Market Square, Welsh Street, High Street and Church Street. The street pattern provides both the historic and physical setting for these buildings and as the surveys show is integral to both the appearance and experience of the buildings themselves. As such the conservation, protection and enhancement of the premises is directly impacted by what goes on in the streets in which they are situated.
62. The surveys also reveal that Bishop’s Castle in the 21st century is a continuum of its history since the 1100s. The Conservation Area today reflects the current desire to accommodate change in such a way that it celebrates the town’s history and dynamism. At the same time, it ensures that by not being over-manicured, new vibrant opportunities to address 21st century needs and aspirations can be realised within the historical context. As such this is another facet of the conservation of both Bishop’s Castle’s architecture and its culture.
63. Examples of this are found in the way premises are decorated and new build or renovations are undertaken. Painted murals are a significant feature throughout the town regardless of a building’s age.



Pound Cottage on Union Street – Zone 7



Tan House on Church Street – Zone 6

⁵ Policy DP24 is detailed on page 121 of the Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan 2016 to 2038.

Renovations or rebuild of older properties capture the essence of the original construction and decorations through time.



An original carving on the beams under the jetty of the 16th century Porch House, a Grade II* Listed building remains and was augmented on renovation on the new beams in 1989 with carvings of the owners' children.

Zone 5



A major rebuild/renovation of a Grade II Listed Building on School Lane incorporates several features and materials relating to the original structure and the buildings around it. This includes two dormer windows to match the roofline of the adjacent buildings which are also Grade II Listed. Zone 5



In a variety of ways new build has also sought to reflect key aspects of the historic built environment, sometimes in a very 20th century form.



Dormer windows and front portico
Zone 7



Red brick with staggered lines and roof that reflect the adjacent properties in High Street. – Zone 5



High density, detached development of unique buildings with intricate and varied footprints and forms – Zone 8



Painted, rendered dwelling with dormer windows – Zone 7

64. Shropshire Council's Historic Environment Record as published in the document CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL BISHOP'S CASTLE (last updated 2012; Source: Shropshire Council Sites and Monument Records), appears to be somewhat out of date as regards the 161 locally listed non-designated heritage assets. For several premises in the list the identification details are erroneous. They include, for example names of business premises that ceased decades ago, making the premises now unidentifiable without local historic knowledge. 20 premises were impossible to locate either because they no longer exist in the location described or because no specific location is provided.
65. Given both the recognised intrinsic significance of locally listed non-heritage assets and their significance within this Conservation Area, the Historic Environment Record needs to be updated. This should enable continuity of identification details where relevant; verification of the premises continued existence; and the inclusion of any appropriate additional assets that have been identified in the surveys. The Appendices to this document include 1. Items of Archaeological Significance. This contains an annotated list of the 161 non-designated heritage assets which covers the above- mentioned anomalies in the current published list.

Opportunities to enhance the historic environment

66. Consideration should be given to identifying opportunities to minimise eyesores and enhance the appearance and/or usage of visually prominent areas identified in the zone surveys.
67. The most complex is the confluence of Market Square, Bull Street and Salop Street, including the frontage to the Castle Hotel and the Square itself. This area is described in the Zone 2 survey and is listed on Figure 5, page 29 below as a Sensitive Site. Records show that historically this area was a vibrant focus of agricultural and commercial activity with important civic buildings and the old Market Hall and the Town Hall, at either end. Whilst this locality is made up almost entirely of Listed Buildings and non-designated heritage assets and remains an area of well-kept, iconic, active buildings the confluence itself now appears lifeless and is characterised by a wide expanse of tarmac carriageway and a litter of parked cars.



It is dominated by both moving and stationary traffic. The space now functions primarily as a key vehicular route for both commercial and domestic vehicles, whether passing through the town or accessing the town centre and its surrounding properties. The development and funding of a holistic plan to reduce the traffic impact and restore this location as a focus of human activity should be a priority (see paragraph 91.1 page 32).

68. In addition, opportunities should be sought to address negative aspects of the following locations identified in the zone surveys:
- a) Sites B; C; F; and G shown in Figure 5 on page 29 and referenced in paragraph 72 on page 23 below
 - b) The access from Bull Lane to the Bowling Green and footpath: Zone 1
 - c) The Chapel Yard access from High Street to the Heritage Resource Centre: Zone 5
 - d) The neglected landscaped area on the corner of Castle Street and Welsh Street in which stands a mature copper beech: Zones 1 and 3
69. Unsightly and/or visually prominent telegraph poles and cluttered street furniture including grit and litter bins were mentioned in most surveys: the former on 9 separate occasions and in every zone but one; the latter featured in seven of the nine zones and was referred to on eleven separate occasions.



Telegraph pole on the Square – Zone 2

Cluttered signage at the corner of Union street and Church Street – Zones 6 & 7



Whilst it is accepted that all of these items need to be accommodated and that there may be limited potential to effect any change, should the opportunity arise to undertake any environmental improvements in the Conservation Area, the impact of these features should be taken into account.

Protecting the heritage assets and their setting

70. It is Impossible to escape the importance of the landscape both within and beyond the Conservation Area. It is visible everywhere and has always been and continues to be an inherent part of the community's culture, connecting the urban dweller with nature and providing a permanent reminder of the town's long history and its original development along the front of 32 burgage plots, later extended by a further 14 to reach the Church. It is also a reminder that this is a market town for the surrounding rural hinterland and its agricultural economy. It is also the landscape that has generated the tourism



View from the Castle Hotel garden – Zone 2

economy on which the town also depends today. There is an annual walking festival and the long-distance footpath, the Shropshire Way bisects the town and is used by locals and visitors alike.

71. The views out from the Conservation Area streets and the significance of trees and vegetation within the settlement are positively referenced in all zone surveys. The luxuriant landscape is described as creating a sense of tranquillity; providing a connection with the natural environment; softening the urban landscape; and providing opportunities for insects, small mammals and nesting birds to thrive. Areas of soft landscape within the built environment as well as glimpses out to the surrounding hills are an ongoing prerequisite to the maintenance of the character of the Conservation Area.



View from Union Street along a shut to the rear of High Street – Zone 2

72. In addition to the sites referred to in paragraphs 67, page 21 and 68, page 22 above four additional sites are identified as sensitive to development in terms of potential impact on the Conservation Area. They are also plotted in figure 5 on page 29. Sites D and E lie within the Conservation Area. Site D is a split site, either of which may be that which is referred to in Shropshire Council's local list of non-designated heritage assets as 'Tenement plots south of Welsh Street'. As no specific location is given for this asset it is not included in figure 3 on page 10. Site E lies at the southern corner of the Conservation Area, outside the development boundary. It is an unused field beside a track that is the Shropshire Way. The location is described in the Zone 8 survey as "an open field alive with birdsong and wildflowers in summer, the setting becoming progressively more rural as the lane travels southwards". Any future development of either of the sites would impact on the feel of their setting and should be assessed on that basis.
73. Sites H and I immediately adjoin the Conservation Area. The former is currently in agricultural use and the latter is the town park and playing field. Any proposals to develop either of these sites in the future would directly impact on the Conservation Area and their viability should be assessed on that basis.
74. The major challenge as regards protection of the heritage assets, their setting and the historic infrastructure is how to enable the town to continue servicing its rural hinterland, sustain its agricultural and tourism economy and enable 21st century lifestyles that include internet shopping. All require vehicular access to and through the Conservation Area streets which are laid out on a 12th century infrastructure framework.
75. All zone surveys record problems related to traffic which are not occasional but endemic. The "sense of cars" within all zones was considered dominant. In places there was direct damage to heritage assets including a Grade II Listed building. 'Near

misses' were reported and sometimes photographed. The following is an indication of the mismatch between the historic infrastructure and 21st century demands on several streets.



Bull Street – The Shropshire Way. The walkers have emerged from a blind track beside the red brick house. On a different day the van, travelling north, has reached the house next door – Zone 2



High Street – Whilst frequently busy with pedestrians, two-way traffic, including commercial vehicles, attempts to manoeuvre alongside parked cars. – Zone 5

Market Square – Also part of the Shropshire Way must cope with parked and moving vehicles of all sizes – Zones 2 and 3





Salop Street – Pavement parked cars in both directions to enable traffic to pass on one side of the road. All pedestrians must use the carriageway and those exiting premises on the south side risk meeting large vehicles – Zone 2



The lorry is passing the Three Tuns Inn.



Damage to the sign of the Grade II Listed Three Tuns Inn from a high sided vehicle avoiding parked cars.



Welsh Street – Parked cars must directly abut the facias of the buildings on the south side of the carriageway to enable vehicles to move along the opposite side of the street (above right).

A lorry delivering goods to a farm to the west has entered Welsh Street from Castle Street in front of the building on the right side of the image above. It can go no further without serious damage to the Welsh Street properties, all of which are heritage assets – Zone 3





Kerry Lane – Parked cars at the staggered five-way junction with Brampton Road and Church Street. Just beyond the carriage works on the right the road narrows creating a single track when large lorries or hay wagons travel through to the west. – Zone 8

76. Going forward, if change is to be accommodated in a way that continues to reflect and conserve the town's and the community's character, whilst mitigating any adverse effects the following 3 recommendations must form the basis of the NDP policies as well as inform ongoing development management decisions.

Recommendation 1: Heritage Assessments

77. SAMDev MD13 (2) and policy DP 24 require all proposals which are likely to affect the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset, including its setting, to be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment, including a qualitative visual assessment where appropriate.
78. In Bishop's Castle, any Heritage Assessment under MD13 should take account of this Character Assessment. All applications for development within the Conservation Area must evidence in their proposals that reference has been made, and where possible accommodated, to relevant characteristic features of the Conservation Area in general and to the zone in which the site is located. This must address and include the following:
- i) The characteristic materials, footprints, intricate building lines, and decorative facias etc. as referenced on: page 13, paragraphs 37 – 39 of the above section 'Common architectural features within the built environment of the Conservation Area'; page 16 above, in the table of 'the most commonly cited positive characteristics'; and in the individual zone survey in which the premises is located.
 - ii) The nature of the footprints of both the spaces and the buildings in the area adjoining the site and the proposed links to it.
 - iii) The opportunity to include soft landscaping to enhance the ambience of the site, reflect Bishop's Castle's connection to the surrounding landscape and provide opportunities for wildlife.

- iv) The maximisation of any existing and potential views to the surrounding rural landscape from both the site itself and its adjacent surroundings.
- v) Proposals should evidence that existing views of the surrounding landscape from the adjacent locality are, as far as possible, protected.

Recommendation 2: sensitive sites

79. The following locations must be formally recognised as sensitive to change as well as providing opportunities to enhance the development of the town. As such, any future changes must: comply with MD13 and DP24 and its application in Bishop's Castle; and/or evidence positive ways in which they would impact the character of the Conservation Area as expressed in the zonal surveys; and identify actions that would be taken to mitigate against detrimental effects on the character of the Conservation Area.

80. Proposals for these sites must ensure that any adverse impact on the Conservation Area as a whole is minimised in accordance with MD13 (3) which states that

proposals which are likely to have an adverse effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, including its setting, will only be permitted if it can be clearly demonstrated that the public benefits of the proposal outweigh the adverse effect. In making this assessment, the degree of harm or loss of significance to the asset including its setting, the importance of the asset and any potential beneficial use will be taken into account. Where such proposals are permitted, measures to mitigate and record the loss of significance to the asset including its setting and to advance understanding in a manner proportionate to the asset's importance and the level of impact, will be required.

Sensitive sites within the Conservation Area – (see Figure 5 on page 29)

- A. Market Place and the confluence of Bull Street, Salop Street and Market Square: Ref. Zone 2
- B. The undeveloped land on the northern side of School Lane, opposite the Heritage Resource Centre. These are believed to comprise the 'Tenement plots east of High Street' which are recorded as a non-designated heritage asset on page 8 of Shropshire Council's Historic Environment Record⁶: Ref. Zones 4 & 5
- C. The Shropshire Council owned Church Street carpark accessed under the flying freehold between nos. 64 and 66 Church Street: Ref. Zone 6
- D. Undeveloped land along the north side of Laburnum Alley. This comprises private gardens and cultivated plots which are clearly visible from the pathway

⁶ Conservation Area Appraisal – Bishop's Castle, updated 2012

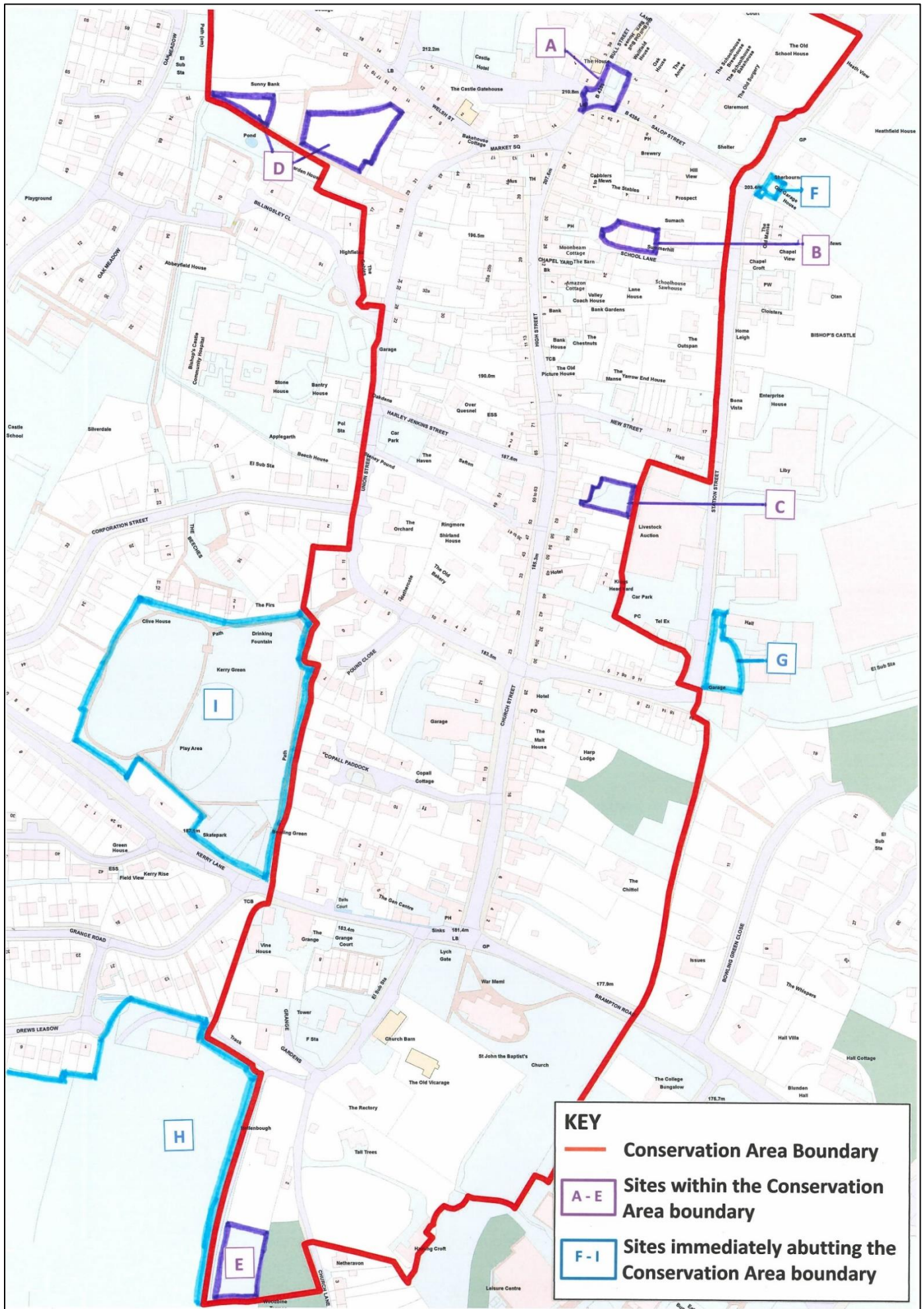
and are integral to maintaining the sense of nature and tranquillity along this 'hidden' route. Although unconfirmed, these undeveloped plots may in fact constitute the 'Tenement plots south of Welsh Street' that are listed as a non-designated heritage asset on page 6 of Shropshire Council's Historic Environment Record: Ref. Zone 7.

- E. The undeveloped land abutting field Lane, to the south of the property Hollenbough. Field Lane which is the Shropshire Way forms the boundary of the Conservation Area. It also defines the change from the urban to the rural environment, providing access to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Welsh Hills and other long-distance footpaths to the south and west. At this point, the traveller is beyond the urban landscape: Ref. Zone 8.

Sensitive sites abutting the Conservation Area – (see Figure 5 on page 29)

- F. The former garage site at the eastern end of Salop Street. This site abuts the eastern pavement of Station Street the Conservation Area boundary runs down the western pavement. The site currently provides a clear view from the Castle Hotel forecourt, down Salop Street, across Station Street to Oakeley Mynd and the rural area immediately bordering the town. It is very prominent and, for many years has had a very neglected appearance: Ref. Zones 2 and 4.
- G. The vacant site opposite the Cattle Market/Auction Yard on the eastern side of Station Street. This site lies just outside the Conservation Area (CA) as the CA boundary runs down the western pavement of Station Street and around the western boundary of the Auction Yard. As it is a significant space that is immediately visible from the opposite side of the street that lies in the CA the negative impact on the character of the CA is considerable: Ref. Zone 4.
- H. The undeveloped land abutting Field Lane to the west. Field Lane, which is the Shropshire Way, forms the boundary of the Conservation Area. It also defines the change from the urban to the rural environment, providing access to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Welsh Hills and other long-distance footpaths to the south and west. At this point the traveller is beyond the urban landscape: Ref. Zone 8.
- I. The Playing Fields accessed from Union Street and Kerry Lane. The site provides a significant contribution to the character of the town as an events venue; a location of both historical and modern artefacts and a landscaped area within the built environment: Ref. Zones 7 and 8.

FIGURE 5: SITES SENSITIVE TO CHANGE



Recommendation 3: minimising adverse transport impacts

81. The Conservation Area Appraisal, last updated and published by Shropshire Council in 2012, refers several times to the historic street pattern that characterises the town. Paragraph 4.5, page 9 states *“The gridiron layout of the small narrow streets provides the basis for the way the buildings are grouped together and the space that is created.”* On the following two pages it continues to emphasise the narrowness and constriction of the streets – *“The way the buildings are built hard up against the road and the almost uninterrupted street facades are very much part of the identity of the town”* (para. 4.7); *“The narrowness of the streets in this part of Bishop’s Castle area (sic) is a particular feature.”* The area referred to is Market Square, Bull Street and Salop Street.
82. Paragraph 4.16, page 13 states *“The main negative factor has been the movement of traffic along the main streets and the chaotic on street parking along the main streets.”* Whilst it goes on to state that *“traffic management measures have been introduced which have eased the conflict between pedestrians and vehicular traffic”*, it must be recognised that those measures were introduced before the publication of the document. In the eight years since publication, growth in activity, new housing developments and increased internet shopping, are just some of the reasons why increases in the volume of traffic servicing and using the town centre streets has outweighed the traffic management measures that were put in place pre-2012.
83. Priority must be given therefore to exploring potential actions that are innovative and holistic to ameliorate the problems caused by the competition between moving traffic, parked cars and pedestrians. This is an issue that impacts on the local population on a daily basis. It also impacts on the town’s tourism economy particularly as the Shropshire Way, an important and well used long distance footpath, bisects the town through some of the locations where the problem is highly significant.
84. This issue affects every zone in the Conservation Area; comprises the majority of the negatively ranked characteristics; and is particularly significant in six of the 9 zones – **Zones 2,3,5,6,8 and 9.**
85. Other than to destinations in the rural area of the Welsh hills immediately to the west of the town, the A488 to the east and, to a lesser extent the B4385 to the north, provide the only means of access to the whole of the United Kingdom. All traffic to and from properties on the western side of the Conservation area **must** go through the Conservation Area streets to reach either the A488 or the B4385.
86. To access properties in the north western half of the town, by far the majority of this traffic uses the Conservation Area streets of Salop Street/Market Square/Welsh Street (Zones 2 and 3 which are described so accurately in the above-mentioned Conservation Area Appraisal). To access properties in the south western part of the

town the Conservation Area streets of Brampton Road/Kerry Lane (Zones 6 and 8) must be used.

87. All three of the streets at the northern end of the town are already severely affected by traffic related problems as indicated in the character assessment surveys of Zones 2 and 3. At the southern end, problems particularly occur at the junction of Brampton Road/Church Street/Kerry Lane (described in the Zone 6 and 8 character assessments). This location is a key attraction for visitors, particularly walkers and those experiencing the heritage of the town.
88. It is part of the Shropshire Way, with an information board on the route ahead. This encourages walkers to stop and learn of interlinking routes with the footpath. It also provides access to the churchyard which contains 12 Grade II Listed memorials alongside the church which, with its Norman tower and historic one-handed clock is a Grade II* Listed Building. Yet, because of the traffic issues, the junction and its information board is far from an amenable place to stop and is described in the Zone 8 survey as “a place to pass through”.
89. The reasons why the Brampton Road/Church Street/Kerry Lane junction is currently heavily trafficked and should not be subject to further increases in traffic flow are:
 - i) There are currently in excess of **340** houses, a Primary School; a children’s nursery facility; 2 sheltered accommodation facilities, a Nursing Home, a Community Hospital, a Fire Station, a Church Hall, a Bowles club, a pub and a Brewery, all of whose only means of vehicular access to both the town and hinterland is via Kerry Lane and whose direct access to the town centre and hinterland is via the Brampton Road/Church Street/Kerry Lane junction.
 - ii) Pedestrian access to the Primary School, the nursery facility and one of the sheltered accommodation facilities from properties to the south and south east parts of the town is also via Kerry Lane and this junction.
 - iii) The junction forms part of a staggered configuration within a 440-meter stretch which contains two further entry points of Church Lane (the Shropshire Way) and a small housing development, together with a vehicular access to a pub yard. The complexity of this junction, together with the inappropriate parking at this locality, which is referenced in the Zone 8 survey, increases the conflict situations.
 - iv) A survey taken in spring 2014 at a Kerry Lane junction just beyond the survey area, recorded 129 cars and 76 pedestrians in a 15-minute period. Kerry Lane is only one vehicle width in places and 58% of its length has no pavements at all.
90. Any additional increase in traffic generated from the western side of the town that could travel either the route through Welsh Street/Market Square/Salop Street or

along Kerry Lane would make an already problematic situation in the Conservation Area intolerable.

91. The following are priorities as part of a holistic approach to addressing and minimising adverse traffic impacts.
 1. Investigate the funding, production and implementation of a landscape plan for Market Place and the adjoining space which covers the confluence of Bull Street/Salop Street/ Market Square. (see also paragraph 67, page 21; paragraphs 79 and 80, page 27; and sensitive site A on Figure 5, page 29)
 2. To safeguard the Conservation Area for the future and mitigate against increasingly intolerable levels of the traffic/parking/pedestrian issue, no further development should take place to the west, south west or northwest of the development boundary unless access to the A488 and the B4385 through any part of the Conservation Area is prevented.
 3. Identify public space infrastructure requirements and enhancements that would be necessary to ameliorate existing problems caused by the competition between moving traffic, parked cars and pedestrians, particularly in Zones 2, 3, 5 and 8 and notably on High Street, Welsh Street, Market Square, Salop Street and around the junction of Brampton Road, Church Street, Kerry Lane and Church Lane.