

Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document



April 2014

Conservation Area Management Plan : **Rugeley Town Centre**

Introduction

This area-specific Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) follows from the Council's Conservation Areas Management Plan which sets out the package of measures available to the Council to apply to all of its Conservation Areas. The area-specific Plans relate to each of the individual Conservation Areas based on the recommendations in the individual Conservation Area Appraisals, and should be read in conjunction with the generic Conservation Areas Management Plan.

Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area

Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area was designated in December 1973 and covers the historic core of this market town. Its boundary is shown on Plan 1. Rugeley stands between Lichfield and Stafford on the south bank of the River Trent on ground rising from the valley to the forest and heath of Cannock Chase. The Rising Brook flows down from the Chase through the centre of the town. The town was first documented at the time of the Domesday Survey, and its development has focussed on the main Lichfield-Stafford road along Upper and Lower Brook Street and part of Market Street together with Brook Square and Market Square. Also parts of Brewery Street, Bow Street, Albion Street and Anson Street which lead off the main streets.

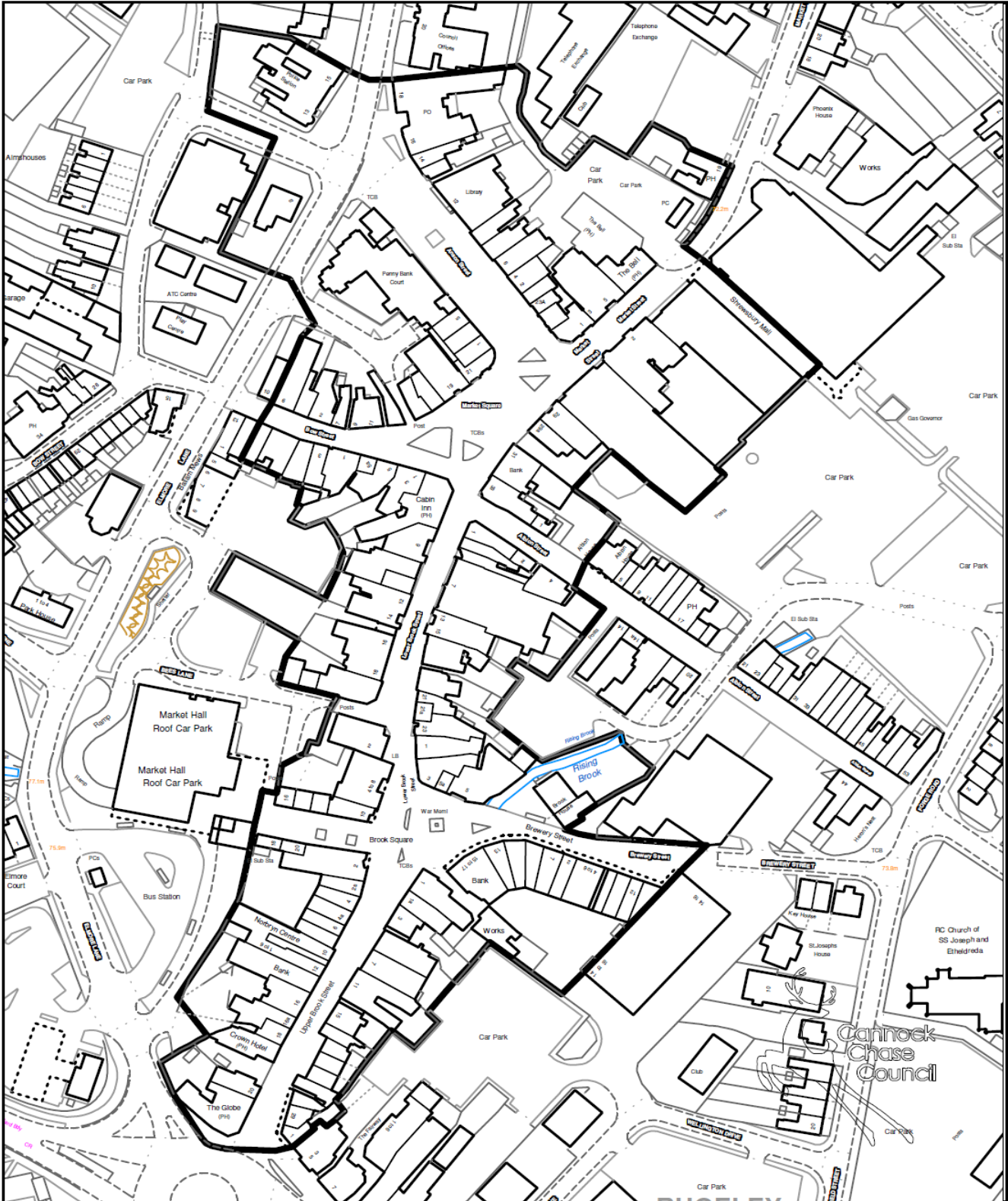
The townscape of Rugeley town centre is defined by its informal street pattern of narrow winding streets and open spaces complemented by the diversity of building types with which it is lined. The streets are enclosed by building frontages of two and three storey height of varying plot width, design, period and materials, and seven are listed. Much of the Conservation Area appears to date from the 19th and early 20th Century, though some buildings may have earlier cores and often retain part, if not all, of their original plot to the rear, though in many cases with modern rear extensions and additions. Traffic was removed from the town centre in the 1980's and car parks and services areas created behind the main frontages. Shops form the predominant use at ground floor level, together with banks, estate agents and pubs, cafes and hot food shops. Upper floors, where in use, are mainly storage, offices or flats.

Issues identified in the Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

The Conservation Area Appraisal for Rugeley Town Centre has been prepared and adopted. It defines the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area and identifies its negative features. These are illustrated on the Townscape Plan 2. It makes recommendations for future management and enhancement opportunities arising from this assessment, aiming to reinforce the positive features and eliminate the negative to ensure the continued quality of its special interest over time.

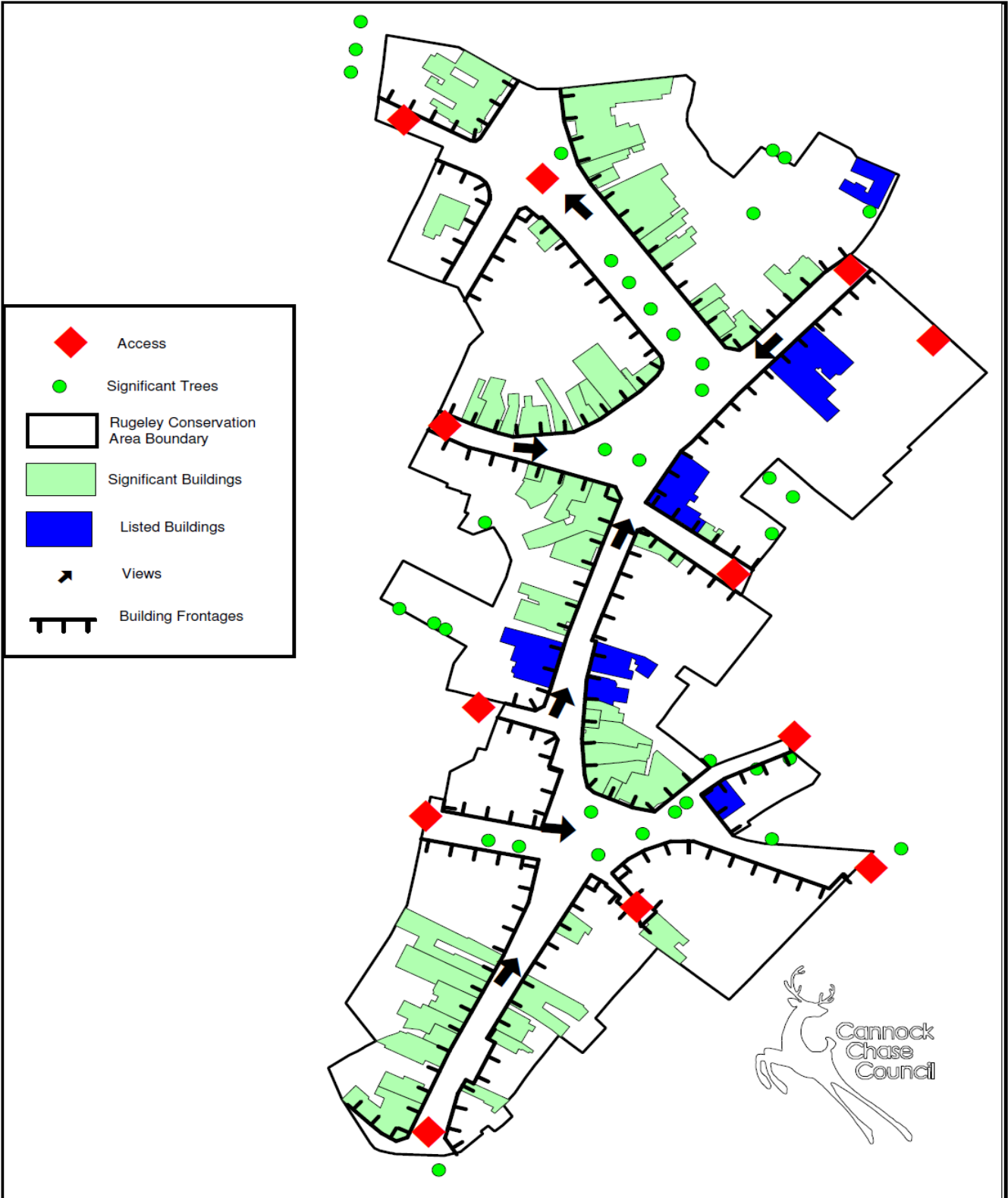


PLAN 1: CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY





PLAN 4: TOWNSCAPE APPRAISAL



Summary of its special interest

- Its long history still evident in its layout and buildings
- Its traditional street pattern of a tightly built up pedestrian town along a winding main street
- Its mixed small scale retail/commercial uses and markets
- Its townscape of diverse building types and buildings/groups of individual interest, harmonised by mass, height, scale and materials
- Its human scale, with visual interest created by irregular frontages, rooflines and design details

Main issues:

1. The retention and enhancement of buildings and characteristic features making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, including architectural detailing which is extensively subject to decay and low economic demand for properties particularly vacancy of upper floors.
2. The treatment of new development and new additions to existing buildings within and affecting the setting of the Conservation Area, including building lines and siting, height and mass, design, materials, views of landmarks, shopfronts and signage.
3. The potential for enhancement of the Conservation Area through the reduction of clutter and refurbishment of the public realm, with a focus on the open areas of Market Square and Brook Square and opportunities to improve existing limited tree planting.
4. The potential for enhancement of the setting of the Conservation Area with improved pedestrian links to surrounding areas.

Delivery Plan/Targets/Resources

A package of measures as set out in the Council's generic Conservation Areas Management Plan is available to deal with the above issues in a way beneficial to the Conservation Area. Their effective use is dependant not only on the Council but on a partnership approach including the commitment of developers, development professionals and the local community. This area specific Management Plan seeks to stimulate debate on how the issues might be addressed.

1. The retention and enhancement of buildings and characteristic features including occupancy

- The Council will encourage the retention, repair and maintenance of the following characteristic features on all buildings making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area including the unlisted buildings of particular interest:
 - timber windows, particularly sash windows, and doors to traditional designs and details
 - predominance of brick buildings with some light coloured stucco/painted render
 - blue slate and small red and blue clay roof tiles
 - predominance of pitched roofs with roof slopes facing road frontages
 - decorative ridge tiles

- chimney stacks and clay pots
- decorative eaves, window surrounds and doorcases
- cast iron or cast metal rainwater pipes and gutters
- high brick boundary walling
- informal street pattern with building frontages abutting streets
- timber shopfronts to a traditional design
- The Council will discourage use of artificial materials and non-traditional designs which are bland and lacking in the rich textures and colours of natural materials and the painting and rendering of brick buildings.
- Safeguarding characteristic features will require an acceptance by property owners of their intrinsic value and a commitment to invest in their property to maintain its historic value. Historic features can be slowly lost through decay and under-investment as well as more rapidly through modernisation and unsympathetic over-investment. The Council will undertake to work with property owners to encourage appropriate maintenance and explore the option of a partnership arrangement with English Heritage and property owners to provide funding to address deterioration of building fabric.
- The Council will consider the preparation of design guidance on specific issues and offer other advice on request or via its website which can be sought prior to carrying out work.
- The Council will review the Conservation Area boundary from time to time to ensure it is still workable and that it encompasses a definable cohesive area with a particular character.
- The Council will pursue enforcement action where unsympathetic alterations which threaten the character or appearance of the Conservation Area are carried out without the necessary planning permission to achieve a more sympathetic result.
- The Council will encourage maximum occupancy of properties including flats and other appropriate uses above shops to enhance the viability and vitality of the town centre.
- The Council will promote street markets and other events which bring life into the town centre.

2. The treatment of new development

- The Council will require proposals for new infill development and redevelopment to adhere to well established good urban design principles for scale, mass, form, materials, layout, density, landscaping and boundary treatment, with the use of good contemporary design and materials or more traditional options as appropriate.
- The Council will require new development to reinforce existing strong frontages with buildings abutting streets on an informal layout, reflect existing building variety and detailing including colour, texture and range of materials and maintain or enhance views through the Conservation Area.



Fig. 1 Traditional detailing in need of repair.

Fig. 2 Traditional detailing in need of repair

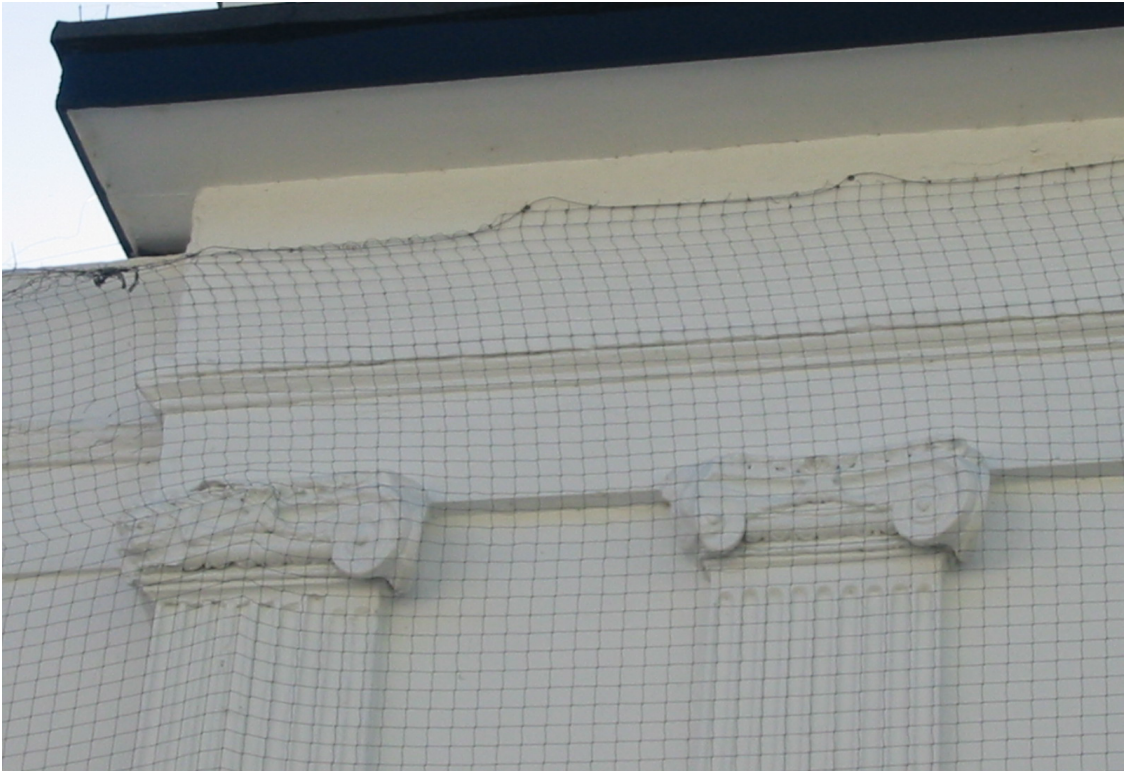




Fig. 3 Traditional windows in need of repair



Fig. 4 Unsympathetic modern window replacement.

Fig. 5 Paving and interpretation boards in Market Square



- The Council will consider the preparation of design guidance on specific issues such as design of shopfronts and signage, and identify areas where further guidance would be beneficial.
- The Council will pursue the economic regeneration of Rugeley town centre through an Area Action Plan, including preparation of urban design guidelines.
- The existing mix of uses, predominantly retail, will be maintained with any compatible additional uses considered which would enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- The Council will apply the same principles to any opportunity sites occupied by buildings of neutral or negative impact within or sites affecting the setting of the Conservation Area which come forward for redevelopment.
- The Council will seek developer contributions in conjunction with planning permissions in accordance with the Council's 'Developer Contributions' SPD and will consider using a proportion of them for enhancement of the public realm.

3. Enhancement of the public realm

- The Council will consider appropriate detailed options for enhancement of the public realm in the town centre through an Area Action Plan, including renewal or relaying of paving, replacement or refurbishment of street furniture, updating of the design of Market Square, enhancement of Rising Brook and removal of 'clutter'.
- The Council will consider the potential for enhancement of the town centre through new and replacement tree planting for the longer term in appropriate locations.

4. Enhancement of setting of Conservation Area

- The Council will apply the same urban design principles used to consider new development within the Conservation Area to new development affecting the setting of the Conservation Area.
- Opportunities for improved pedestrian/cycle links between the town centre and surrounding areas, particularly with the Canal and Elmore Park, will be pursued through the Area Action Plan to maximise use of existing assets and enhance the setting of the town centre and views in and out.
- The Council will ensure that opportunities for new development adjacent to the Conservation Area retain the necessary accessible parking and servicing to serve town centre premises as well as appropriate access to public transport facilities.

Monitoring

The Council will monitor progress towards the delivery of the above actions and the resultant impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area on a five year cycle. Some of the actions will be on-going, some will relate to specific actions which can be completed. The monitoring process together with developing Planning Policy will inform updating of the Appraisal and Management Plan over time.



Fig. 6 Paving, lights and tree planting in Anson Street



Fig. 7 Clutter of modern street furniture in Brook Square



Fig. 8 Fence areas open to view from Elmore lane.

Monitoring will involve further consultation with the community and may identify new issues and ideas for raising standards. Monitoring could also be carried out within the community, under the guidance of the Council.