

Outlying buildings/hamlets in rural areas

Character Description: An arc through the north, centre and south of the District composed of open countryside across Cannock Chase and the southern farmlands, throughout which buildings range from scattered farms/houses to built up frontages/hamlets and villages. Potential traces of earlier farmsteads within urban areas, associated with historic paths and boundaries.

Key features are:

- The rural landscape, undulating in north and flatter in centre and south, is designated Green Belt and bounded by well defined edges to adjacent urban areas which expanded from small chains of industrial hamlets over former farmland. Farmland, especially where it survives with historic farmsteads in a variety of uses, is therefore of rarity and importance, providing key link to historic development of District. Trent valley crosses area in far north.
- Large part of northern area dominated by Chase, a medieval royal hunting forest exploited historically for coal mining, mineral and metal working and associated with numerous small farmsteads, small holdings and cottages. Area designated AONB. Elsewhere courtyard farmsteads developed within fields of regular/irregular boundaries resulting from piecemeal or planned development. Medieval parks e.g. Beaudesert fringed Chase. In late 19th/20th century Chase used for military training, for conifer plantations and as amenity area for surrounding conurbations. Reminders of these uses remain e.g. WW1 trenches on Chase (a scheduled ancient monument). Canals and railways cross area e.g. Chase Line from Walsall to Rugeley Trent Valley.
- Heaths, woods and fringes around Chase in north have scattered buildings, mainly detached Victorian and interwar houses, with few modern replacements, with roadside cottages and farmstead groups north-west of Slitting Mill.
- Horse grazing/stables are common features on urban fringe, often relating to small plots characteristic of this area.
- Farmsteads within and around Beaudesert Old Park in east include large planned farmstead at Chestall, typical of estates around Cannock, and small scale linear farmsteads

Key Local Design Principles or 'New developments should':

- Accord with Green Belt policy placing a strict limit on new development and with AONB policy to preserve natural beauty, wildlife and peace of Cannock Chase.
- Where development allowed, the landscape setting of trees, hedges and natural vegetation should be preserved/enhanced as a priority with householder 'permitted development' rights controlled and landscaped buffering to boundaries as appropriate. Siting of buildings should take advantage of screening opportunities provided by existing planting and land forms, and new boundary treatment should enhance the rural location with hard surfacing generally kept to a minimum.
- Preserve and enhance locally distinctive buildings/features and their settings.
- Respect and enhance the form of historic farmsteads in their landscape context.
- Ensure lighting is kept to a minimum to reduce urban impacts in dark landscape of the rural areas.
- Safeguard essential rural character of eastern section of A5 route.

Further information:

- Landscape Character Assessment (2008)
- Cannock Chase Local List
- English Heritage Historic Farmstead Survey (2010)

(with houses attached to working buildings, of a type found in upland areas and where smallholdings developed) which developed within landscape of very small irregular fields around heath, probably linked to industrial by-employment.

- In centre around Kingswood and north of Norton Canes a new reclaimed landscape exists with large scale modern urban elements, (major roads, distribution warehouses and pylons) in a newly landscaped setting with trees and lakes.
- Farmland character predominant along eastern section of A5 strategic highway with mature trees, boundary hedging and grass verges and scattered historic farmsteads/public houses. Modern industrial area on isolated former colliery site at Watling Street Business Park.
- In Coalfield farmlands to the south are medium-sized hedged fields and hedgerow oaks with estates and cottages, e.g. Little Wyrley. This southern group, south of Norton Canes, is District's most intact survival of historic farmsteads, the majority of which developed in piecemeal fashion around courtyards within a medieval and later landscape of small irregular fields.