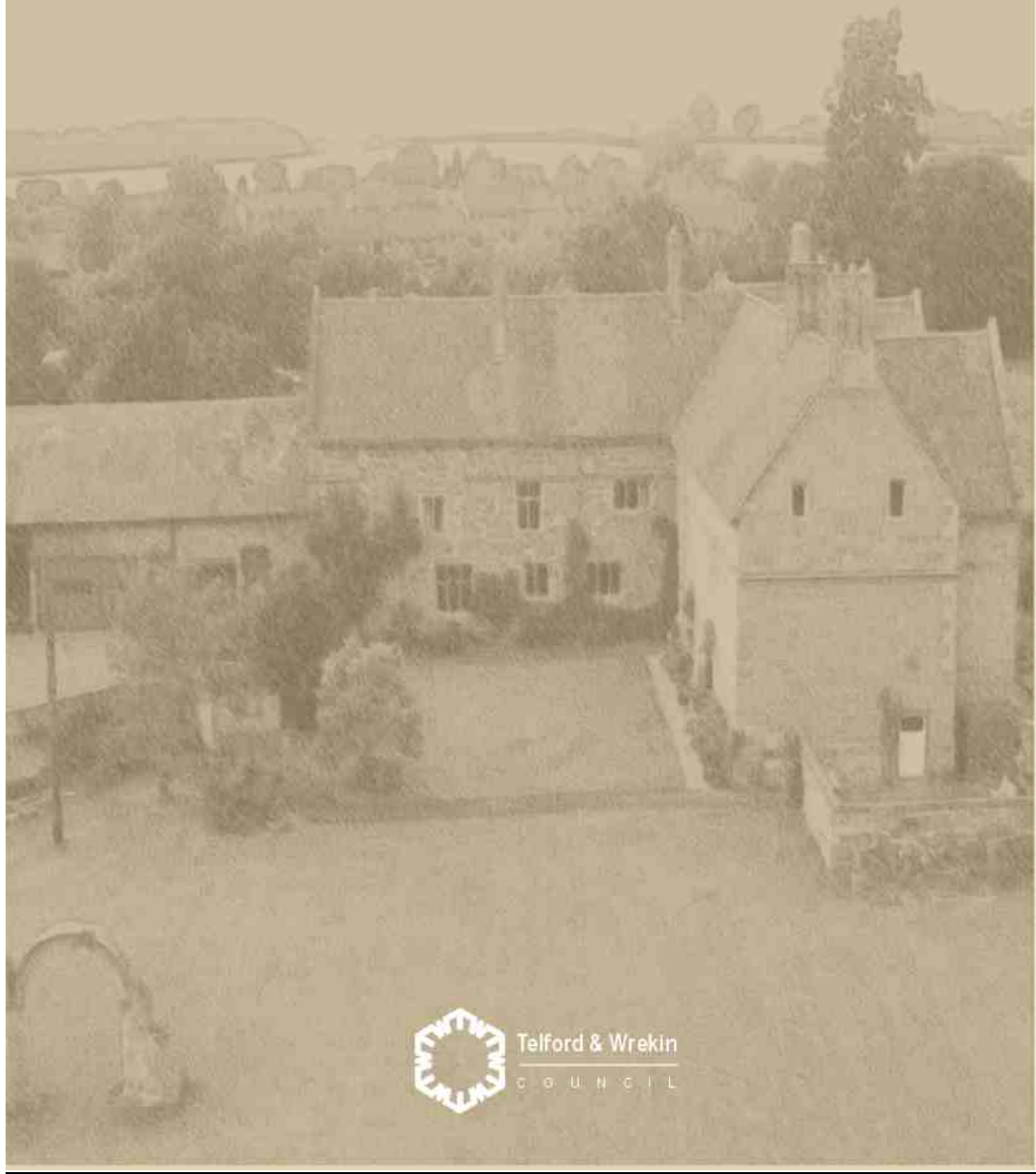


# High Ercall

Conservation Area Appraisal



Telford & Wrekin  
COUNCIL

**HIGH ERCALL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

**(DRAFT) 2007**

## **Introduction**

Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. They are special areas where the buildings and the spaces around them interact to form distinctly recognisable areas of quality and interest.

Building groups, walls, trees and hedges, open spaces, views and the historic settlement pattern all combine to create a sense of place. It is the character rather than simply the buildings that Conservation Areas status seeks to protect.

The High Ercall Conservation Area was designated in March 1981. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that all Conservation Areas are periodically reviewed. Best practice is every 5 years. This document is meant to compliment the approved policies for Conservation Areas contained within the Wrekin Local Plan.

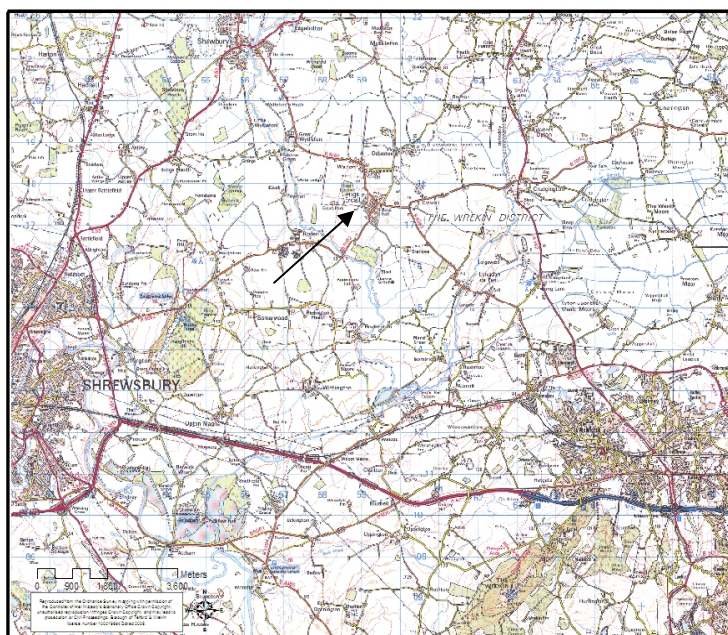
The purpose of a Conservation Area Appraisal is to carry out a “clear assessment and definition of an area’s special interest and the action needed to protect it will help generate awareness and encourage local property owners to take the right sort of action for themselves.” (PPG 15 4.9).

The objectives of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal are to:-

- To improve the understanding of the history and historical context of High Ercall
- To provide residents with a clear idea of what should be cared for and made special and what enhancements could be made
- To provide the Borough Council with a valuable tool to inform planning decisions.

## Location and Context

High Ercall is located approximately 7 miles to the North West of Wellington and 8 miles to the North East of Shrewsbury. It is a pleasant village with a number of older houses and buildings congregated beside the church. It lies within Ercall Magna Parish Council which is situated on the Shropshire plain at an altitude generally of 240 feet (70 metres) above sea level and is the largest rural parish (in area) in the Borough of Telford & Wrekin. The River Roden flows to the West and South West.



OS Plan showing the location of High Ercall



## **Historic development**

High Ercall is mentioned in the Domesday Book, in the ownership of Earl Roger. It is noted as having a mill that yielded twelve weeks' provisions, and a fishery of 1500 great eels. In the reign of Henry III., John de Ercal or Ercalaw obtained the grant of a weekly market and an annual fair.

Work began on the Church of St. Michael, probably in the late 12thC and an earlier moated manorial enclosure which contained a gate house and a tower, though little evidence of this now remains. It replaced an earlier Norman church possibly dedicated to Edward the Confessor. The church is the only surviving medieval building in High Ercall. However, there has been some controversy over the extent of the rebuilding between 1657 and 1662 as to how much of the medieval church actually remained following damage caused during the Civil War. This is complicated by later restoration.

Whilst a charter was received in 1267, there is little evidence to show any significant economic development. By the late 14thC, there were only three recorded shops and these had disappeared within 50 years.

In the 13th century, High Ercall was one of the eighty-two manors owned by Bishop Burnell, of Acton Burnell. As well as being Bishop of Bath and Wells, he was also Chancellor to Edward I, and there is probably no other Shropshire man who amassed such wealth and lands within a single lifetime.

The manor subsequently became the seat of the Newport family and the current manorial seat Ercall Hall was built by Walter Hancock (more famous for designing Shrewsbury's Market Hall) for Sir Francis Newport in 1608.

Sir Richard Newport supplied Charles I. with £6000, thus enabling his artillery to move against the parliamentarian forces immediately before the battle of Edge-Hill. In recompense for which service, Sir Richard was raised to the peerage by the title of Baron Newport, of High Ercall.

The hall was fortified and garrisoned during the Civil War, holding out against a lengthy siege, until the surrender in 1646. Evidence suggests that during the Civil War, much of the settlement outside the Church and Hall was badly damaged and burnt.

The Almshouses to the north of the B5063 (just outside the Conservation Area) were constructed in about 1693 by the Earl of Bradford, and records show a school was also founded around this time also. There are also examples of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>C buildings within the Conservation Area boundary at the heart of the medieval core of the settlement. A more detailed assessment of the historical development of the area can be found through the source material listed in Appendix 2.

## **Character and Appraisal – Key Elements & Appraisal**

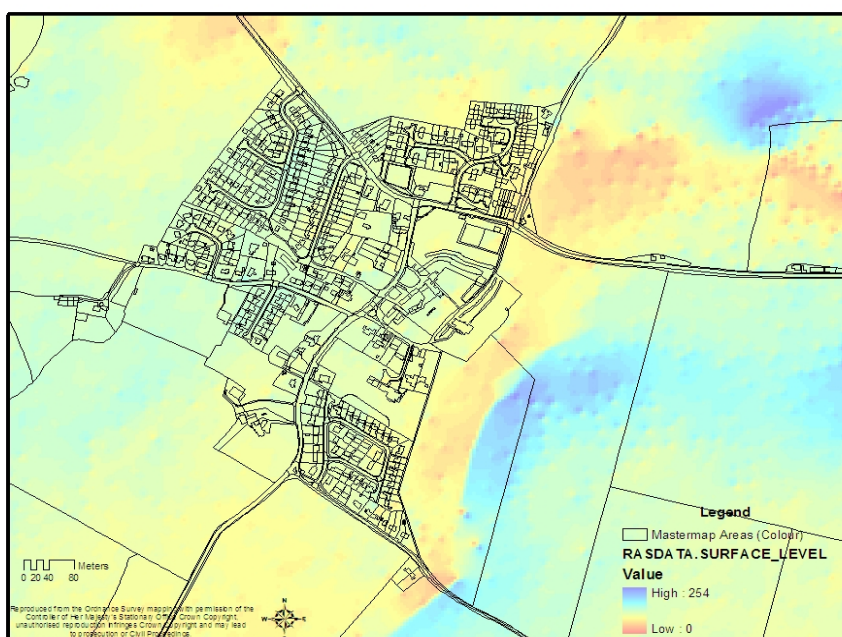
### **Topography, views and vistas**

From the east, the historic core of the Conservation Area is prominent above flat pastoral farmland between the Rivers Roden and Tern. The B5062 (Shrewsbury Road) passes through the village and forms the spine of the Conservation Area. It consists of the immediate environs of High Ercall Hall and St. Michael's Church, and includes all buildings directly off Church Road together with a number of period properties contained within the area of frontages on the west side of the road, approximately 8 hectares in area.

A number of important panoramic views have been identified looking into and out of the conservation area. The first of local importance is that of the key Telford approach to High Ercall along the B5063 (see Plan 1). The view from the main road towards the Church and Hall is for most visitors to the village by car, the only view of these buildings. The view is enhanced by the topography as demonstrated in topographical plan below, as the road descends into the village offering a vantage point for a view of the aforementioned features.

In addition to panoramic views into the village, its geographical location offers a number of interesting views out towards the surrounding countryside. High Ercall offers a number of attractive views back towards Telford and the Wrekin, on a good day stretching as far as parts of South Shropshire and towards Wales. The locations where these can be specifically viewed can be seen on Plan 1, the public footpath running alongside the Church and Old School house is a particularly attractive vantage point.

From the main Shrewsbury Road, visibility of the key buildings is poor, with the exception of Vicarage Cottage and the Coach House. However, on foot and from side roads, much more is visible particularly from the eastern side of the village whereby the transparency towards the collection of buildings and



structures around the Church. Ercall Hall is currently more visible than it has been previously due to a reduction in the density of the foliage above the wall along Shrewsbury Road.

From the road it is possible to see the Hall, outbuildings and listed garden wall. The key views experienced by most people travelling through the village are those of streetscapes. The curves in Shrewsbury Road provide an interesting and attractive street scene which opens up into the junction of The Cleveland Arms which dominates the view from the Old Vicarage Northwards.



**View of church and Ercall Hall**

### **Architecture, materials and trees**

The historic (listed) buildings contained within are described in the nineteenth List (of buildings of historic importance) of 8<sup>th</sup> April 1983 (see Appendix 1) and are shown on Plan 1. In previous lists, 'The Elms' was included as a grade III listed building. This lowest grade was omitted from the 1983 list, but its description is recorded in the List of Buildings of Local Interest as follows:-

*“Early 19<sup>th</sup> century brick house with modern extension to right (viewed from frontage). Two storeys. Three bays, centre bay pedimented with lunette. Modern casements.”*

Complimenting the historic buildings, an extensive system of boundary walls is evident throughout the Conservation Area. These are generally of sandstone although early 19<sup>th</sup> century garden walls of brick are also prominent. These conform with the general pattern of defining the edges of lanes and the limits of the Shrewsbury Road. (Plan 1) Historic (listed) walls within the plot boundaries are noted for their contribution to the historic character of the area.



**View showing a mix of sandstone and brick walls**

The pre-eminent buildings of this Conservation Area are Ercall Hall and St. Michael's Church. The Hall appears to be a transitional type somewhere between the late medieval fortified manor and the more designed and planned Jacobean Country Houses based on an axial plans and Renaissance detailing. The house and church were fortified and attacked on several occasions during the Civil War, 1645-46. The grounds retain the remains of earth ramparts and timber framed barns, together with a portion of the loggia of an earlier manor house. A long rectangular range of timber framed barns attached on the south-west side of the Hall confirm the predominantly rural operation of the estate and give an indication of the size of the original land holding. Several historic walls of sandstone or brick (in some cases using both these materials), are apparent in the environs of the Church and Hall.





**View of Ercall Hall from Church Tower**



**View of Ercall Hall**

St. Michael's Church was upgraded to Grade I by an amendment to the Statutory List in January 1994. The churchyard contains the remains of a medieval cross noted on Plan 1 as a 'sundial'. It is protected as a scheduled ancient monument. The sundial is now missing. The church maintains its position as the most prominent building in the locality. From the churchyard, there are fine views over the Weald Moors to the Wrekin and Ercall Hill (see Plan 1).

The Church yard offers valuable amenity in terms of a 'traditional' setting with fine examples of mature parkland trees, (Lime, Oak, Horse-Chestnut etc.), together with traditional churchyard evergreens, (Yew). An avenue of limes also leads to the south porch. Wildflowers are evident in the 'natural' areas of the churchyard. Other memorials include several chest tombs near the south porch, and a cross on a tapered stone shaft rising from a base of steps which commemorates the reconstruction works carried out on the Church in 1864-65 by G.E. Street. Reference to a painting by Williams (1787) shows that the windows in the tower have been renewed since 1787. The churchyard is enclosed by sandstone boundary walls of varying height and quality of construction. Some are individually listed (see listing descriptions in appendix 1).



**View of St Michael's church**

South of the churchyard stands the village primary school, a substantial building with a bell tower all rather in the Gothic revival style popular with School Boards of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Additional school buildings and playing field add to the 'green space amenity' immediately to the south of the Church Road housing plots.

The footpath alongside the boundary with High Ercall Hall provides pedestrian access from Church Road to the junction with Shrewsbury Road and Cotwall Road opposite the 17<sup>th</sup> century Almshouses. A path alongside a field boundary to the south of the churchyard allows access to the nearby housing estate, allowing the Shrewsbury Road to be avoided by pedestrians.



**View along public footpath**

Substantial sandstone walls preserve the sense of enclosure along Church Road, despite breaches made to provide vehicular access to the school and a number of dwellings.

Beyond the boundaries of St. Michael's Churchyard and High Ercall Hall, the building pattern consists of two substantial country houses, 'The Old Vicarage' (now called 'The Old Rectory') and 'The Vicarage', not to be confused with the current Vicarage, a modern house off Church Road. 'The Old Vicarage' is a fine period house damaged by poorly specified and clumsily applied re-pointing. Its setting is also eroded by the neighbouring modern estate housing and a small house of indeterminate style squeezed into a small plot alongside the eastern boundary. There is also a large, possibly 19<sup>th</sup> century, house occupying the southern sector of the Conservation Area, which compliments 'The Old Vicarage' in size. It has the advantage of a front garden appropriate to its scale and in which mature parkland trees enhance its period quality.

From Plan 3, it can be seen that most of the modern housing in High Ercall has been built since the 1970's. Not much had changed since the early 1900's (see Plan 2). All of this modern housing is outside the Conservation Area.

Proceeding northwards, 'Vicarage Cottage' represents the smallest historic house type typical to the Conservation Area. It consists of the remains of a 17<sup>th</sup> century yeoman's house enveloped in brick and tile and extended in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. It retains iron lattice windows in a lozenge pattern typical of the mid/late 19<sup>th</sup> century 'Gothic' style.



**View of Vicarage Cottage**

Other houses representing the limited 19<sup>th</sup> century development of High Ercall are spaced at intervals fronting onto the Shrewsbury Road. Generally the frontages are well established with tall hedges above sandstone walls of varying heights. The setting is well-preserved in general with little obvious infill. Each dwelling as far as Park Lane retains most of the frontage that established the edge to Shrewsbury Road in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Land to the rear would likely have been part of the extended curtilage of these dwellings. Substantial stables with hayloft compliment the setting. 'The Elms' also retains stabling.

### **Materials**

Red brown brick and red triassic sandstone are the predominant building materials here. High Ercall Hall is built from large "squared" sandstone blocks sometimes described as "strawberry coloured" The blocks are irregularly bonded and set in slaked lime mortar. The north east front is built of red hand made bricks with a diaper pattern picked out in blue headers. Quions and window surrounds are built in cream/grey Grinshill stone. Copings for parapets are also of the harder sandstone, which is also employed in the copings and weathering course of the listed boundary wall with the church.

Externally, the church displays a mixture of Grinshill and red sandstone. The Grinshill stone was possibly added during repair and restoration works following the Civil War and the extensive remodelling of 1864. The colour and texture of "The Old Vicarage" has been seriously damaged by grey/brown portland cement re-pointing very clumsily applied.

Generally however, the 19 century houses and their outbuildings display the warm red-brown hand made "Imperial" bricks typical of the period 1700 to 1930. The buildings included have managed to avoid cement render and the painting white of red bricks, obvious around the edge of the Conservation Area.

### **Open spaces**

There are not many open spaces within the conservation area, and those which are present are poorly connected. However, the overall character of the village and views into and out of the conservation area are greatly enhanced by the surrounding countryside.

The Church yard appears to be generally well maintained, although the sundial in the South Eastern corner is currently surrounded by rough areas of foliage. It is likely that the Church yard operates as one of the key open spaces within the village, being open for public access, the only location of a bench and offering spectacular views across the surrounding countryside and towards the Wrekin. Farmland use is generally arable with some evidence of pastoral farming within the grounds of Ercall Hall.



### **View of churchyard**

There is no traditional village green and the main village facility, the modern village hall and sports grounds are accessed from Park Lane on the outskirts of the village.

A number of spaces and landmarks operate as important nodes through which the village is physically and perceptually navigated. These sites could further function as meeting points:

### **The Cleveland Arms and Car Park**

The Cleveland Arms is the only public house in the village and as such is likely to serve as a key meeting point for the local community. In addition, its physical setting and outlook establish the building as an important landmark through which the village is navigated both to local and long distance traffic. The adjacent car park provides a large area of open space, previously the site of a recycling centre. This site is outside the Conservation Area.

### **The Bowling Green**

The bowling green is clearly a major meeting point and landmark within the village. Visibility of the green from the road is however very poor being surrounded by high level hedgerows. This area does not contribute greatly to

the character and overall feeling of the village. There are two examples of typical village green-type space within the road system in the village, these serve as nodal points and fragment the monotony of the road. This site is outside the Conservation Area.

### **Area of green space adjacent to main junction**

This area of greenery diverts pedestrian traffic away from the road via a cut through which by-passes the road junction. It contains a number of significant trees and from this point there are attractive views towards the Hall and Church. However, being located adjacent to a main junction carrying large amounts of traffic and limited in size, this area is neither heavily used nor particularly dominant. This area has an important visual role in contributing to the character of the village.

### **Area of green space within Church Road**

Similar to that area mentioned above, this patch of greenery lies within the road where Church Road meets Shrewsbury Road. The area contains a significant tree, traditionally known as 'The Gospel Oak' and is bordered by posts. It is unclear if this reference dates from assaults on the house by 'Roundhead' forces or evangelists from medieval times. Whilst not being an area which can be heavily used due to its location, this area adds to the character of the village. As with the space mentioned above, the primary role of this area is visual, softening the spaces within the road contributing to the street scene.



**View of Gospel Oak**

## **Archaeology and Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's)**

Archaeological deposits have been recorded from within and around the historic core of High Ercall. The Central Marches Historic Towns Survey has identified that there is moderate potential for the location of further buried remains, deposits of artefacts and ecofacts within the historic core area (the church and hall). Previous finds include medieval floor tiles and pottery. Little is known of the first manor house of the de Ercall family, though excavations have revealed a probable tower, gate house and moat. Subsequent re-building, particularly during the construction of the Civil War defences is likely to have destroyed much earlier evidence, though some is likely to survive.

It acknowledges that subsequent re-building of the associated settlement in the post medieval period means that potential for undisturbed archaeological remains for the medieval period in this area is low. Generally speaking, little investigative work has been undertaken within High Ercall.

It is likely that the existing roads through High Ercall follow earlier medieval roads and trackways. As such these are unlikely to provide many archaeological deposits, though the perseverance of such routes is in itself an important landscape feature.

The sundial in the church yard to the south of St. Michaels Church is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, it is also listed. Its date is uncertain but it may be the remnant of a stone cross-shaft and base, pre-dating the 18<sup>th</sup> century sundial, now fixed to it.

## **Recommendations, enhancements & Opportunities**

Following the publication of the High Ercall Conservation Area Appraisal, Telford & Wrekin Council will begin work on the preparation of a Management Plan for the Conservation Area. The aim is to have a draft Management Plan ready for consultation by Spring 2008.

As work progresses on the preparation of the Management Plan, it will be necessary to consider the following issues :-

### **Article 4 Direction**

It might be necessary to introduce stricter planning controls to protect features that have been identified in the appraisal as being of special character. Inappropriate extensions to dwellings can gradually erode the special character of the village. This will be subject to full public consultation. If the use of this measure is agreed in principle, it would involve removing permitted development rights on the following elements on road frontages elevations



- Original windows and door details
- Front boundary sandstone/brick walls and gardens
- Chimneys and roofscapes
- Porches
- Painting the exterior of buildings
- Creation of an access off unclassified roads
- Extension and alteration of a dwelling

### **Streetscape/Specific sites with enhancement potential**

Improvement works, including those carried out by statutory undertakers can have a significant effect on the character of the village. These need to be undertaken sensitively in order to protect and enhance those features drawn out as part of the appraisal. This work could include:-

- Identifying potential sites where improvements could be made
- An audit of public realm details including footpath materials and street furniture
- Use of traditional pavements, curbs and road surface materials.
- Protection of boundary walls.
- A lighting appraisal to encourage sensitive and appropriate illumination of key buildings/features
- Careful siting and choice of highway signage and public utilities such as British Teleco boxes, in order to protect and preserve key focal points and important views and vistas.

### **Consideration of buildings for local listing**

It is recommended that a full survey be undertaken, including those which have been considered within this appraisal to decide if a revised local list is needed.

### **Tree Preservation Orders and trees in the Conservation Area**

There are a number of Tree Preservation Orders within the Conservation Area boundary. There have been several planning applications relating to works to trees, including felling, and a thorough re-survey of all Tree Preservation Orders within and surrounding the Conservation Area is required to properly assess their significance and contribution to the character of the area. This will be fully addressed in the Conservation Area Management Plan.

### **Conservation Area boundary Rationalisation**

Although not identified in the appraisal, there would be the opportunity to review the boundaries of the conservation area to decide if they need to be amended.

## **Advisory leaflet**

This could be prepared to give residents advice on how the designation affects them and guidance on appropriate maintenance, repairs and alteration to buildings. It could cover specific features such as roofs, walling, joinery or enclosures. Design Guidance could also be given for new development.

## **Local Planning Policy**

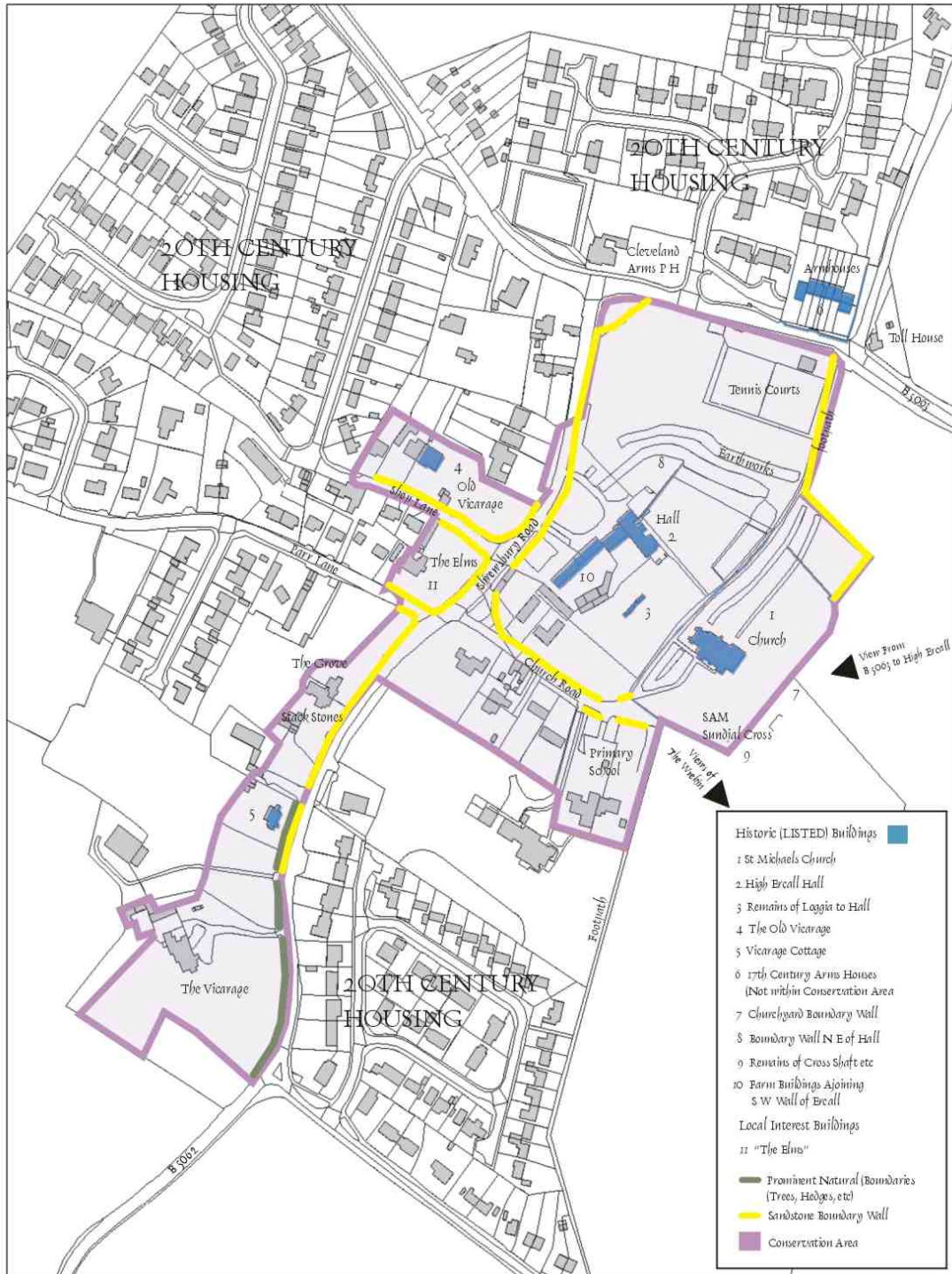
The Council's policy on Conservation Areas are set out in the Wrekin Local Plan. Local Plan Policies HE1 to HE13 in the Wrekin Local Plan are specifically related to Conservation Areas and will affect the determination of any planning application within the Conservation Area or in the surrounding area. The Local Plan is available to view at Darby House/Civic Offices or on the Council website. There are additional policies relating specifically to Listed buildings.

These policies are currently being reviewed and there would be an opportunity to make changes to these policies if required to strengthen our approach on conservation areas.

## **Further Information**

Advice and guidance on planning, historic conservation or Tree Preservation Orders within the High Ercall Conservation Area is available from Telford and Wrekin Council's Planning Control Section (planning advice and TPO's) or Urban Form and Conservation (historic conservation) on 01952 380380. Information can also be found on the Council's web site [www.telford.gov.uk](http://www.telford.gov.uk)

**March 2007 (draft)**  
**Telford & Wrekin Council**



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Title: High Ercall Conservation Area Appraisal: Plan 1

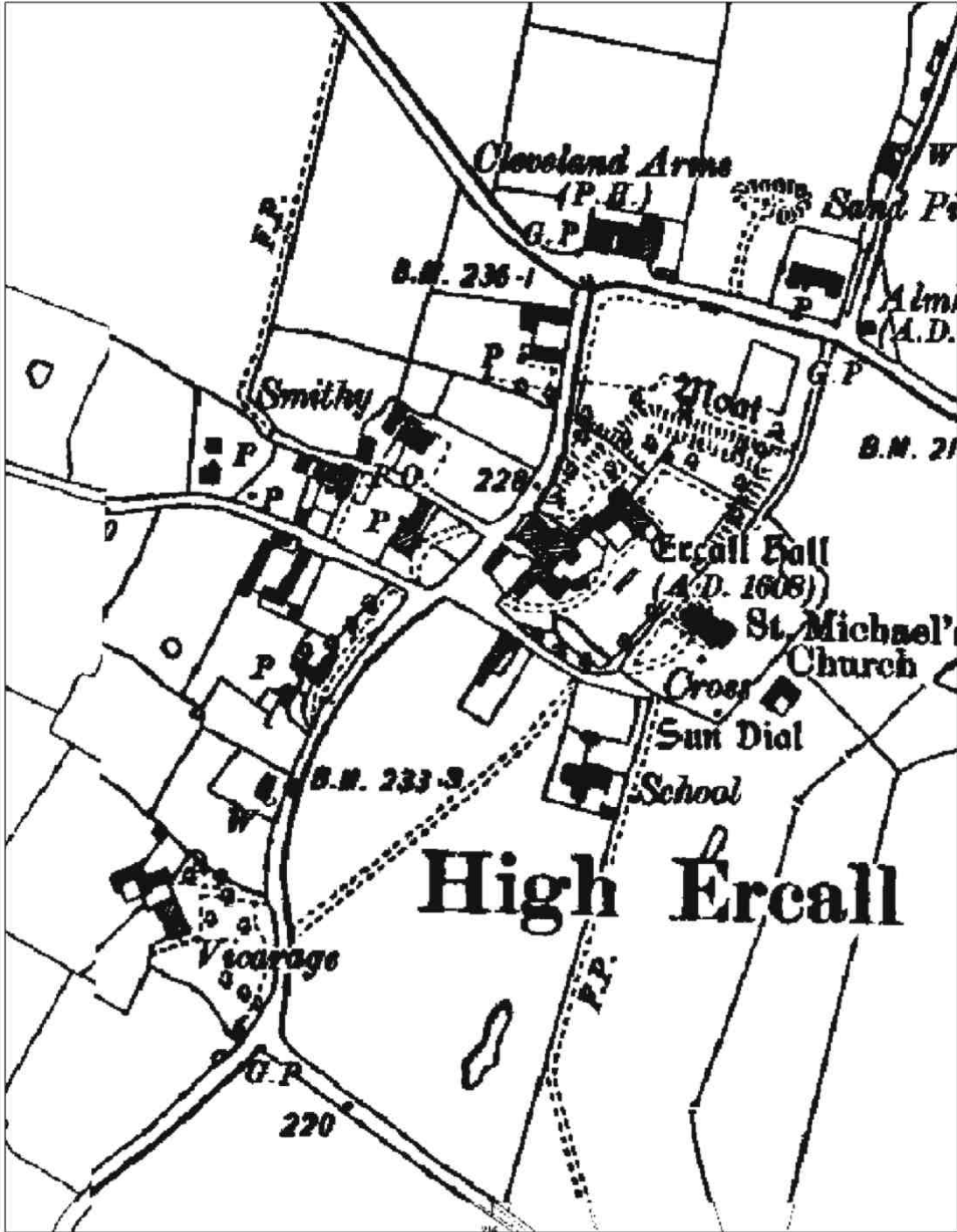
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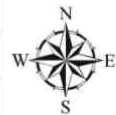
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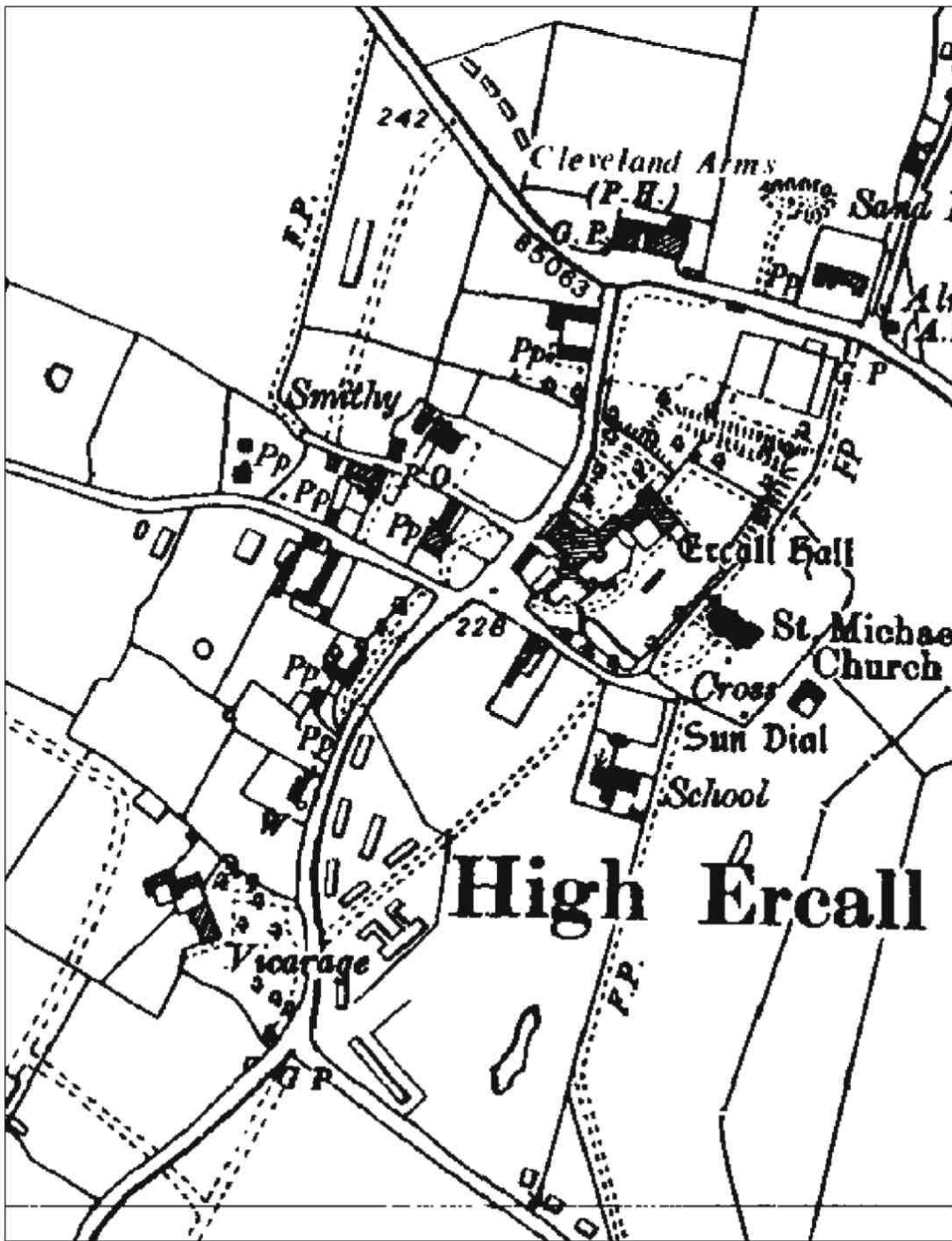
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Title: *High Ercall historical Map 1967: Plan 3*

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**Appendix 1: List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest (Listed Buildings) as defined in the 19<sup>th</sup> List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest 1983.**

Reference Number	Number or name of listed building	Street	Parish in 1983	Current Parish	Grade	Date of latest Listing	Group Value	Descriptive Notes
LB216	Church Of St Michael	High Ercall	Ercall Magna	Ercall Magna	I	23/01/1994	GV	From late C12. Sandstone ashlar with tiled roof. Badly damaged during the Civil War and repaired in 1658. Restored by GE Street in 1865. Nave and north and south aisles under one roof, the aisles have perpendicular straight-headed 3-light windows. Chancel has 3-light east window with reticulated tracery. North chapel has 3-light perpendicular east window. The vestry on the south side of the chancel and the south porch are 1865. West tower largely perpendicular has angle buttresses with set-offs, 2-light bell-openings, battlements, quatrefoil frieze, perpendicular window, stair turret on north side and moulded plinth. Transitional 3-say north and south arcades with circular piers, square capitals with volutes, leaves and rams' heads. Pointed double chamfered arcade arches. Triple chamfered tower arch with semi-circular responds and water-leaf capitals. Double chamfered chancel arch has restored capitals. Two-bay chapel/chancel arcade has hollow-chamfered arches and octagonal piers. Nave, north chapel and chancel have double hammer beam roof probably late C17. Reset early Norman tympanum in north wall of nave. Monument: under chapel arch early C14 cross-legged knight with shield and a lion at feet. Victorian furnishings. In churchyard to south of church some C18 and early C19 tomb chests and C18 headstones.

LB218	Churchyard boundary wall	High Ercall	Ercall Magna	Ercall Magna	II	08.04.83	GV	C18 and C19. Low churchyard boundary wall built of sandstone ashlar. The west and south sides have coping and moulded plinth. The north and east sides built of large sandstone blocks, and partly rubble at the south-east corner.
LB219	Ercall Hall	High Ercall	Ercall Magna	Ercall Magna	II*	04.01.52	GV	Built in 1608 for Sir Francis Newport by the mason Walter Hancock who designed the Market Hall, Shrewsbury, and possibly Condover Hall. Situated on a moated site, the earthworks can be seen to the north and north-west. Large sandstone house, L-shaped on plan. The north-east front is red brick with blue brick diaper pattern and stone dressings. Steeply-pitched tiled gabled roof. Three storeys. Five bays with 3 projecting gables, the centre gable has stone panel with inscription. Four-light stone mullion windows with cornices. Large brick chimney stacks with grouped shafts. Wing at rear built of sandstone with brick gables and stone mullion windows. Country Life 21/02/1920.
LB223	Vicarage Cottage	High Ercall	Ercall Magna	Ercall Magna	II	08.04.83		C18 red brick cottage remodelled in circa mid-C19. Steeply pitched plain tile roof with gabled end, the south end has a gabled parapet with internal brick stack. Brick dentil eaves. One storey and attic. Two window range. C19 two-light casements with lozenge shaped panes in chamfered brick reveals, with drip moulds. One gabled dormer with similar casement. Brick porch with hipped tile roof to left and lean-to on south end.
LB224	The Old Vicarage	High Ercall	Ercall Magna	Ercall Magna	II	08.04.83		C18 brick house with steeply pitched plain tile roof with gabled ends. Two storeys and attic. Attic windows in gable ends. Two window range. Sashes with glazing bars ground floor tripartite sashes. Brick stringcourses above ground and first floor windows. Central modern wooden porch. Brick central stack. Contemporary brick wing at rear.

LB217	Sundial south of Church of St Michael	High Ercall	Ercall Magna	Ercall Magna	II	08.04.83	GV	Unknown date. Conical stone base surmounted by octagonal stone which is possibly the remains of cross-shaft, with a bronze sundial dated 1718.
LB220	Arcade to south-east of Ercall Hall	High Ercall	Ercall Magna	Ercall Magna	II*	8.06.59	GV	Circa 1608. Probably the remains of a loggia and once part of the original composition of Ercall Hall. Now detached and situated in the garden south of the house. Freestanding 4-bay stone arcade in ashlar with 5 circular piers and 4 moulded arches.
LB221	Wall to north-east of Ercall Hall	High Ercall	Ercall Magna	Ercall Magna	II	08.04.83	GV	C17 brick garden wall on sandstone foundation. Part is retaining wall to earthworks of earlier fortifications. Three pointed-arch doorways.
LB222	Farm buildings adjoining south-west of Ercall Hall	High Ercall	Ercall Magna	Ercall Magna	II	18.06.59	GV	C18 red brick farm building with tiled roof with gabled ends. Brick dentil eaves course with ventilation holes below. Stone mullion windows are later insertions. Adjoining the south-west is circa C17 timber-framed barn faced in brick except for exposed timber framing in gable end with brick and boarded infill panels. Also a tiled roof.



## **Appendix 2: Bibliography**

Some references in this document have been taken from “The buildings of England” edited by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, published by Penguin and “The Shell Guide to Shropshire” by Michael Moulder, published by Faber & Faber. In these books, more complete descriptions of the prominent buildings of the Conservation Area and others in the immediate locality may be found.

Further information about St Michael’s church can also be found in “Churches of Shropshire & their Treasures” by John Leonard published by Logaston Press.

Information on the history of High Ercall was taken from the Victoria History of Shropshire published by Oxford University Press