



CONSERVATION AREA 46

CHURCH EATON



The cover map of Staffordshire was first published by Hermann Moll in 1724. It gives special emphasis to the roads, rivers and parkland. The County boundary differs from the present one, as parts now in Shropshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire are included.

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING COMMITTEE
TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1971

CONSERVATION AREA 46

CHURCH EATON



PURPOSE OF DESIGNATION

The rapid changes now taking place in town and village, whilst giving practical benefits, also threaten many beautiful and historic areas with destruction or despoliation. Such areas, often unique in character due to rich variation in types of buildings, trees and open spaces, form an important part of the national heritage.

In the past, individual buildings of architectural or historic interest have been protected by legislation, whereas attractive groups of buildings, often of little individual value, and areas of character, beauty or historic importance have been mainly unprotected.

The Town and Country Planning Act, 1971, remedies the deficiency by enabling local planning authorities to designate as conservation areas those "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance."

Potential conservation areas exist in many towns and villages, varying in size from complete centres to groups of buildings. Although often centred on historic buildings, they may include features of archaeological importance, historic street patterns, village greens or areas of particular character.

Staffordshire has been strongly influenced by the effects of the Industrial Revolution and consequent growth of industry and population. The pressures resulting from this growth cause considerable problems in terms of visual environment, nevertheless many areas and settlements of good traditional character still remain in the towns, villages and country estates. Their preservation cannot be considered in isolation, without taking into account the natural growth and future needs of people, commerce and industry.

Conservation is the means by which existing character can be preserved and enhanced with due regard for other demands. Designation of the Conservation Area followed by detailed design proposals will form the basis for positive action, but ultimate success will depend on active public interest and support.

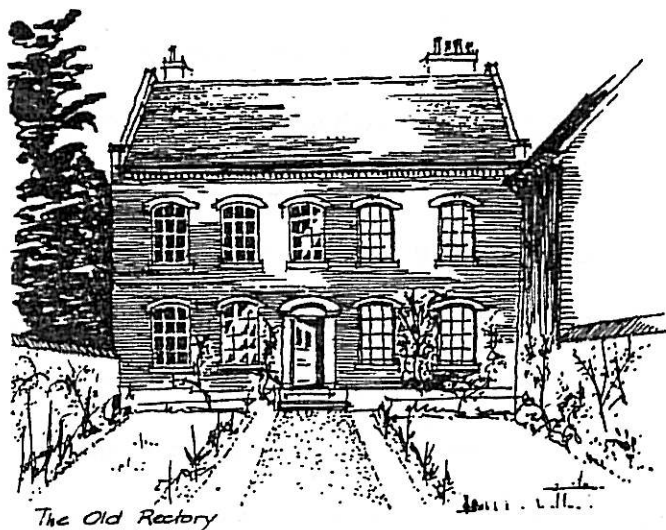
CONSERVATION AREA * CHURCH EATON

An ideal English village is often pictured as a church spire rising above cottages, within a setting of winding lanes and hedge-lined fields. At Church Eaton the essential ingredients of such a picture are there, but visually the village is suffering from conflicting demands upon it.

Church Eaton village lies 6 miles south-west of Stafford, but the route by road through Haughton increases the distance to 7 miles. The nearness to Stafford is now the dominant influence in the social and economic structure of Church Eaton. As in so many English villages, the majority of residents are not engaged in agriculture, but commute for employment to towns, especially Stafford. The rural setting, the absence of long-distance traffic and the traditional character will have attracted people to Church Eaton. The irony of the present situation is that the new pressures threaten to destroy the very attractions that brought them into being. The situation is epitomised by the neglect of a genuine but derelict half-timbered cottage at one end of the village opposed to a modern half-timbered porch at the other.

To some extent conflict between rural suburbia and ancient village has been avoided, thanks to the concentration of new development at the west end of Church Eaton. The strictly linear plan of the settlement, based on the High Street, has invited such a policy. The Conservation Area includes the whole of the east end of High Street and enough of the adjoining land to protect the setting of the church and other principal buildings. Seven of the buildings within the area have been listed as of architectural or historic interest by the Department of the Environment.

The approach to Church Eaton from Stafford emphasises the importance of St. Edith's Church, both for its own sake and for what it contributes to the general environment. The new Rectory, a careful handling of traditional materials, is first to be passed, and the view is otherwise dominated by the church spire rising among trees of almost equal height. The vertical lines and the clearly defined village edge are strikingly effective, an effectiveness which would be lessened if development were to be allowed on the farming land east and north of the church.



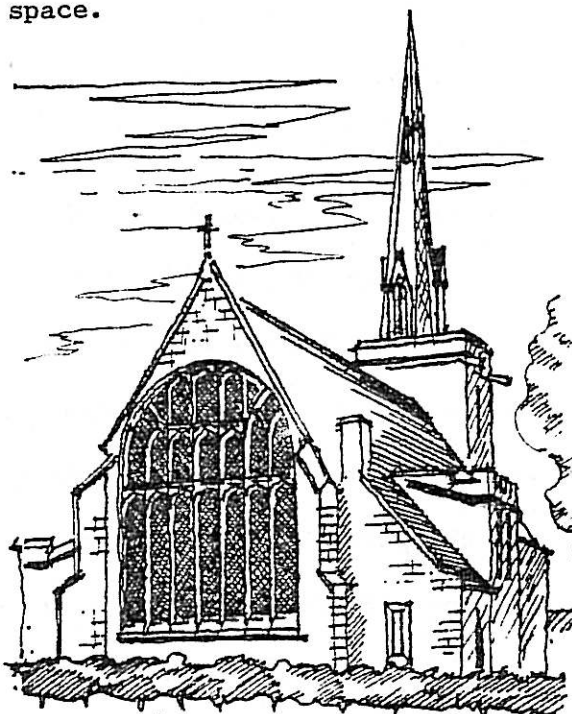
The Old Rectory

The approach from Penkridge and the south-east is almost as impressive. Here the dominant building, apart from the church, is the Old Rectory, with a pleasant brick facade of about 1712. The two approaches converge at the church. The churchyard blocks the south-east approach and also, even

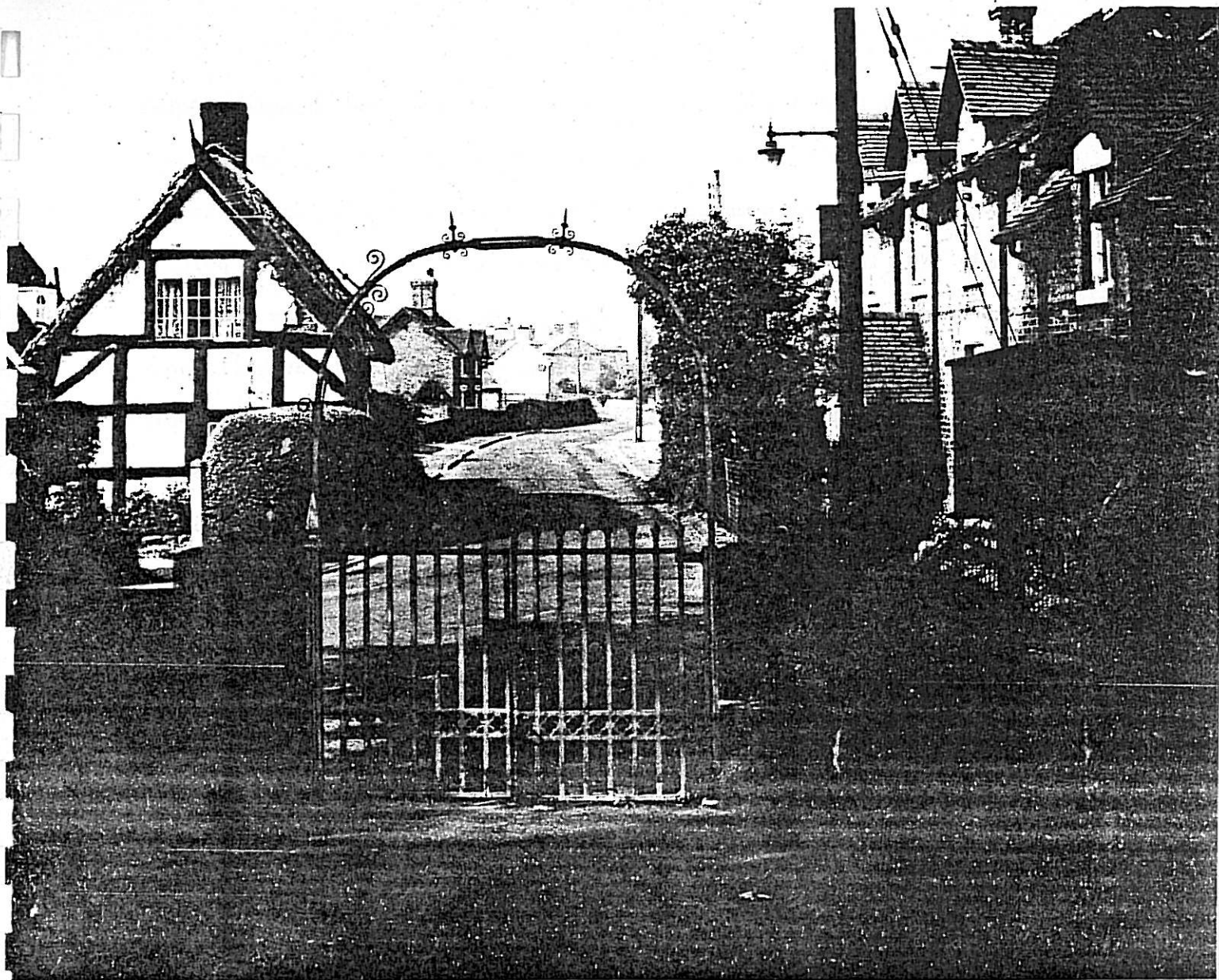
more abruptly, the east end of the High Street. The result is that traffic entering Church Eaton from Stafford and Penkridge has to circle the stone revetted wall of the churchyard. Speed is reduced, and the important dominance of the church is strongly felt.

St. Edith's Church dates partly from the 12th century, although the spire is probably 14th century. Internally the memorable feature is the absence of a chancel arch and the great 7-light window filled with Kempe-designed glass of 1902. Opposite the church, on the west side of the open area formed by the road junction, is the Village Institute dating from 1892. Although the half-timbered construction may be thought self-conscious, the Institute is a suitably large building to occupy such a prominent site, and it has the further merit of confining the space.

The circuit of the churchyard is completed, and High Street is entered. The first buildings on opposite sides of the road anticipate the prevalent theme. Church Farm, of brick with a tiled roof, is slightly set back from the road. Institute Farm, abutting the pavement, is timber-framed with a thatch-covered roof. On the left three chalet-type houses, their high boundary walls providing some frontage continuity,



St. Edith's Church.



HIGH STREET * CHURCH EATON

are followed by Rose Villa, complete with deep eaves and whimsical Gothic windows. The early 20th-century school with modern addition and behind various kinds of fencing makes a poor comparison on the opposite side of the road. Nor is the situation helped here by the prominence of poles and wirescape. Fortunately at the point where the road curves subtly north and then southwards, cohesion returns with the group of buildings that begin with Willow Cottage and end with Rose Cottage and The Briars.

The overall effect in this compact part of High Street is one of variety and at the same time of unity. Building materials range from exposed brickwork to rendering and half-timbering, and frontages are set at varying distances and angles from the road. Sometimes gables are at right angles; more often they are parallel. Unity results from a domestic scale, from a limited range of traditional materials and from the 19th-century or earlier date of all the buildings. Except where the yard of the Swan Inn provides a suitable break, walls, hedges and the buildings themselves provide a continuous frontage. The effective pavement width corresponds to the vagaries of the frontage alignment. Most of the individual buildings rely for their attractiveness on responsible maintenance and on the preservation of such features as doorcases and glazing bars. The Briars and Dolphin House - the former well restored and with a thatch-covered roof - stand out as good examples of timber-framed construction. Smithy Cottage is notable for the retention of its cruck truss and is likely to be the earliest domestic building in Church Eaton.

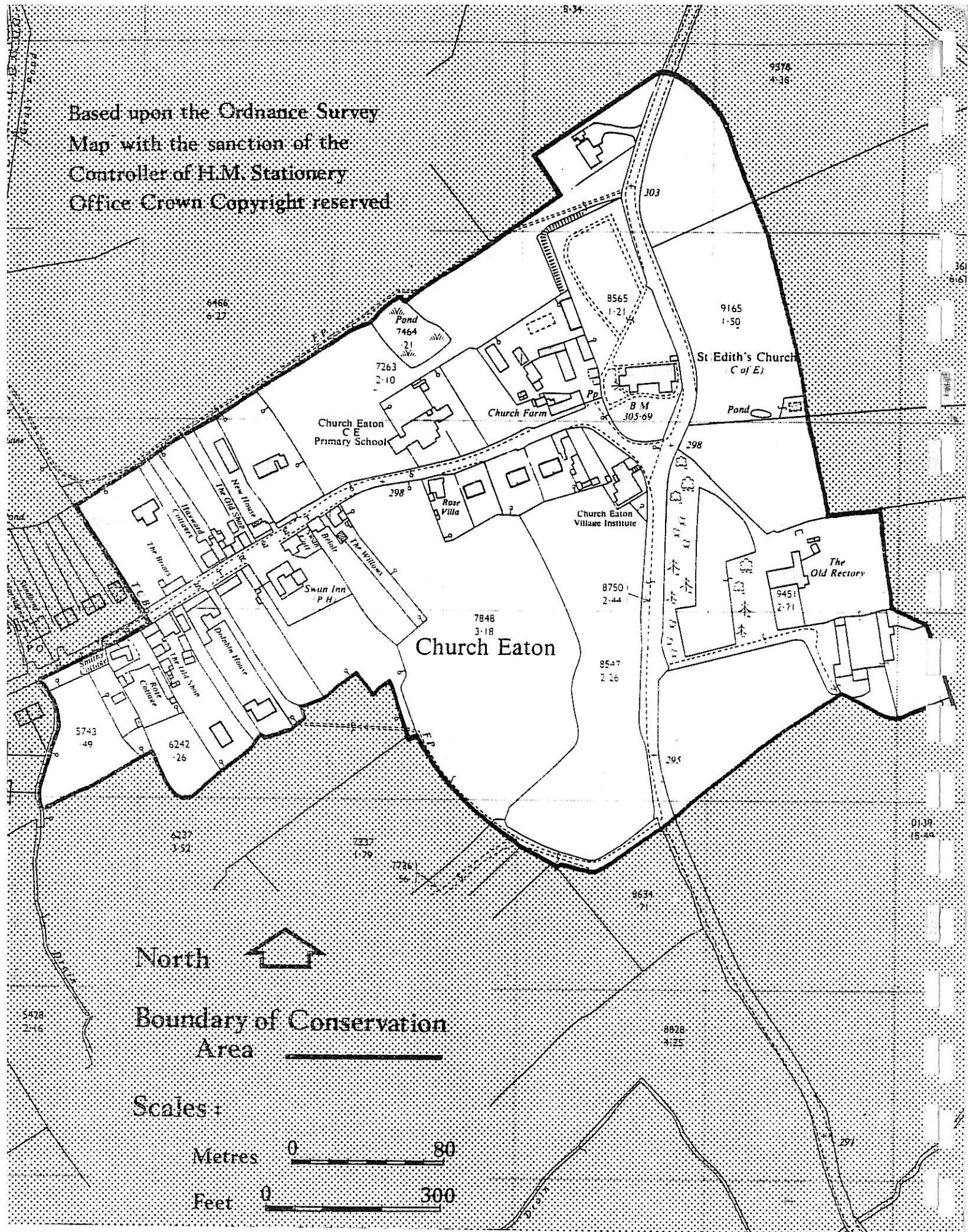
The purpose of designation is to identify what makes Church Eaton visually so attractive and to ensure that these assets are retained and enhanced. Unsuitable materials should be avoided and new development should be sited only where it will increase the feeling of cohesion and not obtrude. The demolition of frontage buildings and the redevelopment of the site behind large open gardens is unacceptable if the old village street picture is to be maintained. As destructive is the practice of interfering with the windows and doorways of buildings where such features are an integral element of the original design. Some buildings would benefit from more attentive maintenance,

and the wirescape along High Street could with great visual advantage be removed.

Designation draws attention to the special qualities of Church Eaton as a Conservation Area. It indicates the local planning authority's concern to monitor change in the direction of making Church Eaton still more attractive both for those who live there and for those who visit.

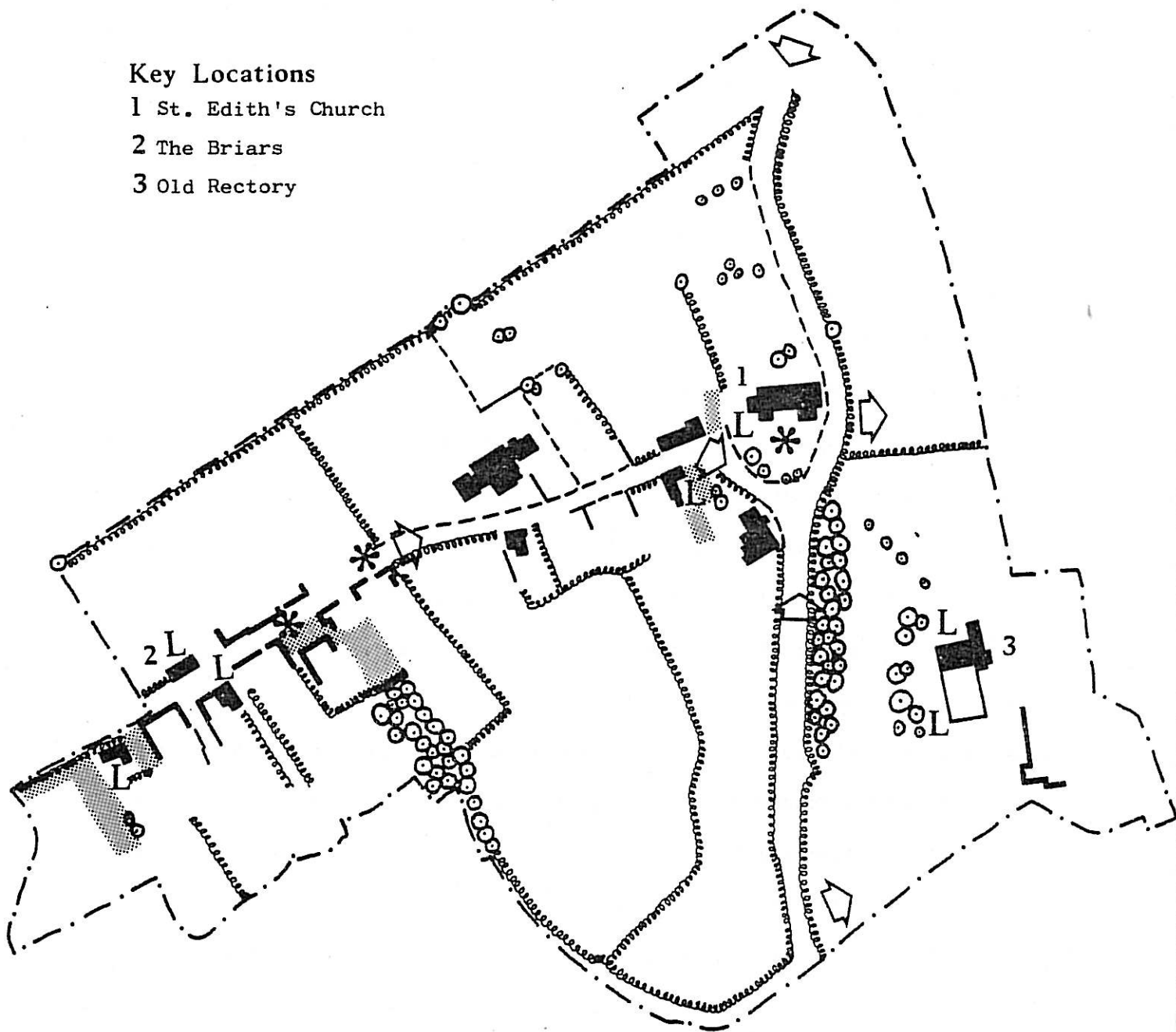


Based upon the Ordnance Survey
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Key Locations

- 1 St. Edith's Church
- 2 The Briars
- 3 Old Rectory



Visual Factors

- Significant buildings
- L** Buildings listed by the Department of the Environment as of architectural or historic interest
- Other significant building frontages
- High boundary walls/fences: effective enclosure
- Boundaries with vision over or through
- Hedges
- Significant trees
- Focal points
- Views
- Areas in need of visual improvement
- Boundary of Conservation Area

VISUAL ANALYSIS

FUTURE ACTION

The Conservation Area has been carefully considered by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the District Council and local amenity bodies.

A specific responsibility is placed upon the Local Planning Authority and the Minister to take account of the character of the Conservation Area when exercising their planning duties and grant-giving powers. Development proposals affecting such areas may also be advertised and account taken of representations received in determining each case.

The Town and Country Planning Act, 1971, makes it clear however that designation of a conservation area is only a prelude to action for preserving and enhancing its character and appearance. The present document is concerned with the reasons for designation. It analyses and defines the basic qualities of the particular features and groups of buildings which it is considered make a significant contribution to the character of the Area. Further reports will set out detailed policies and plans for the Area including recommendations to developers on types of development, on design and on materials considered suitable. The policies may include requirements for detailed information on particular classes of applications, advertisement of applications and proposals for retention of important buildings.

It may be necessary to prepare detailed proposals for improving the appearance of the Area by action such as reduction of traffic congestion, screening of particular features and provision of alternative outlets for undesirable development.

It is hoped that improvement and enhancement of conservation areas will not be completely dependent upon long-term proposals, or restricted by the uncertainties of individual development. Much can be achieved in the immediate future by collective action in street re-decoration, removal of untidy signs and advertisements and planting of trees. Public participation is essential to attract local interest and to support voluntary action by amenity bodies in restoring and improving the beautiful parts of environment.

