

# Appendix E

## SHOBNALL CHARACTER STUDY





## What is a character assessment?

A character assessment is a way of identifying the features of an area that make up its character. It is a detailed answer to the question: 'what is the place like?' and considers criteria such as the landscape, green space, materials, lighting, density, access, security, legibility, vitality, mix of uses, scale and height of buildings, defensible space (looking particularly at front gardens), building and roof lines, window and door designs and rhythms, building typologies, enclosure, movement, views and vistas, the public/private interface, block structure, and bin storage.

A number of broad character areas were identified which were considered to share similar characteristics. This is inevitably an arbitrary way of splitting up the area but the important thing is that it helps identify what is common to or typical of the whole of Shobnall and what aspects are specific to particular areas.

## Why carry out a character assessment?

Consultation undertaken by Shobnall Parish Council has shown that people in the area want to maintain the 'look and feel' of the area, and that new development should respect the established character of the built environment. Shobnall Parish Council commissioned a character assessment in order to help better understand what the 'look and feel' of Shobnall is.

## Consultation and Feedback

While the character assessment conducted as comprehensively as possible, there are things about an area that only the people who live there understand. For example, names were given to the character areas of Shobnall, but local people may have their own names for these areas. Also the character of an area can change at different times of day – traffic, bins and parking being obvious examples - but it was not possible within the financial constraints of the exercise to conduct a survey on more than a single day. Character can also change with the time of year and weather and it was not possible to know what the views are like from the rear of people's properties.

Furthermore residents may not like the emphasis placed on certain aspects of the character. This is subjective. Also memories and impressions are an essential part of the area and while such things cannot be recreated, they can be an important way of interpreting the character of an area.

Therefore there may be additional points that residents might be keen to make. There will be an opportunity to do so before the final version of the neighbourhood plan is published.

## Housing types

There is an interesting mix of mid and late 19th century terraces, and much more recent town houses, flats, semi-detached and detached houses and bungalows arranged in estates. Housing density varies from low (around 25 households per hectare) in the Shobnall Road area, to relatively high (over 50 households per hectare) in terraced areas. Although there are several culs-de-sac, most houses are arranged so that they back onto other houses and face out from the blocks creating active frontages along streets; and its bounding by green space and canal help makes the area feel safe.

## Green space

The parish is highly polarised. There are large areas of green space to the west of the canal, where the houses also mostly have front and back gardens in addition to open areas of greenery at Shobnall Fields, and sports grounds. As well as most houses having front and back gardens, many with hedges, there is variety of quality green space, tree planting, landscaping and grass verges. Combined with the housing and the way the area links into its rural setting of fields, gives the area a mixed suburban and village feel. Whereas to the east of the canal there is relatively little green space. Few houses have front gardens and high housing density leaves little room for open space. To the south of the parish the industrial area not surprisingly also has relatively little green space.

## Other features

Apart from housing and green space, there is the canal that bisects the parish, north to south. There are also several clusters of traditional small and medium sized shops, most notably along sections of Waterloo Street and in an area around the intersections of Wellington Street and Derby Street. A more modern edge of town shopping and dining development is located around the two main roundabouts at the end of Shobnall Road. The parish also features a large industrial area of iconic breweries to the south and west, bounded by the A50, Shobnall Road and the railway line. Finally there are several small clusters of offices, often in a residential setting.

# THE CHARACTER AREAS

Development has happened in a number of phases and this is reflected in the broad character areas which have been identified. The main differences between the character areas are to do with housing types (terraces, semi-detached, detached, flats, bungalows), access and block structure and green space.



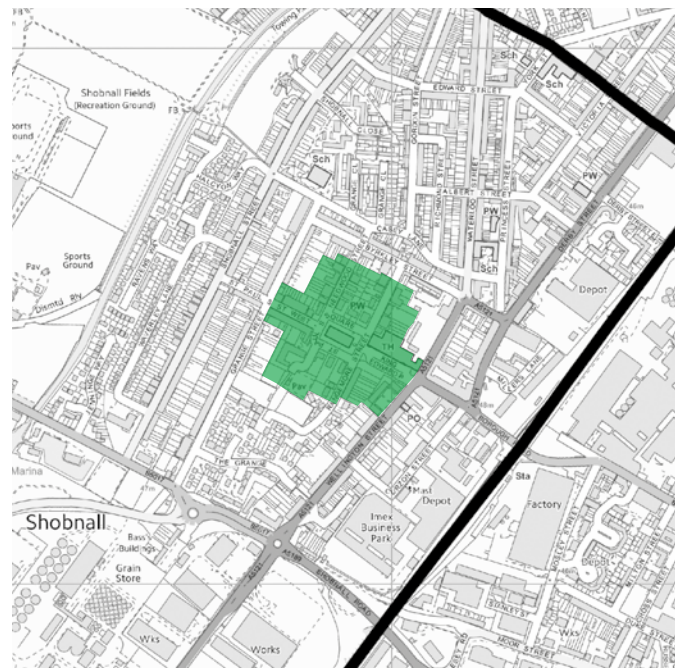




**King Edward Place, St Paul's Square, Rangemore Street (northern end)  
Needwood Street, St Paul's Street West, Almshouses on Wellington Street**

This mixed use area of landmark buildings, and villas with residential and office use, includes the town hall, Almshouses, and St Paul's Church, some of the most notable iconic buildings in Burton on Trent. Centred around St Paul's Square and radiating a block in each direction, the municipal centre dates back to the late 19th century.

With the exception of the terraced housing on St Paul's Street West, buildings are largely detached and semi-detached, and all share significant decorative embellishments including stone lintels to doors and windows, large bay windows, many integral porches, and uniform roof lines creating a sense of continuity and enclosure.





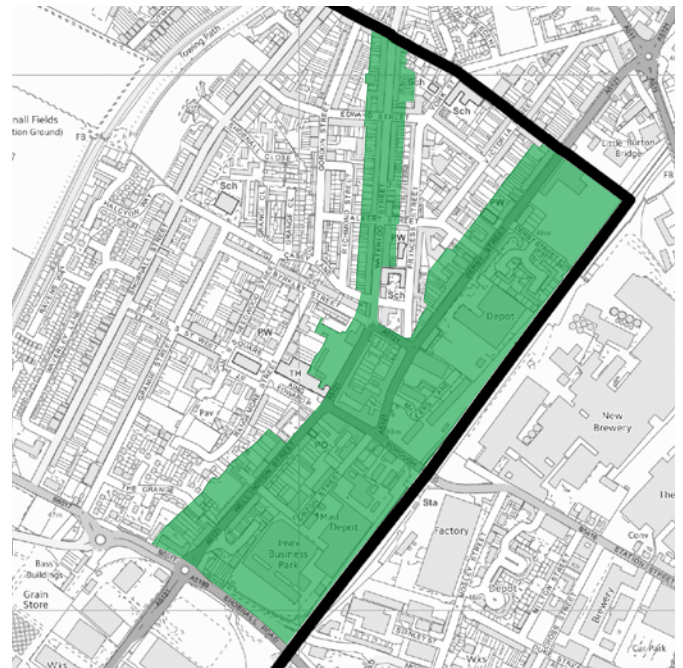


# COMMERCIAL SPINE

Wellington Street, Derby Street, Waterloo Street, Borough Road  
Curzon Street, Millers Lane

Mixed use residential, retail, office and light manufacturing uses bring great vibrancy, vitality and variety to these main routes through the parish. Levels of occupancy are high in retail units (with the exception of a few shops on the approach to the train station) and while shop frontages in some areas could be restored to improve the feel of the area, these streets provide a focus for community activity and are full of life.

Largely set within the fabric of the area of terraced streets within which they are set, the block structure is less distinct in areas of Derby Street and Curzon Road where office development intersperses the traditional street fabric.



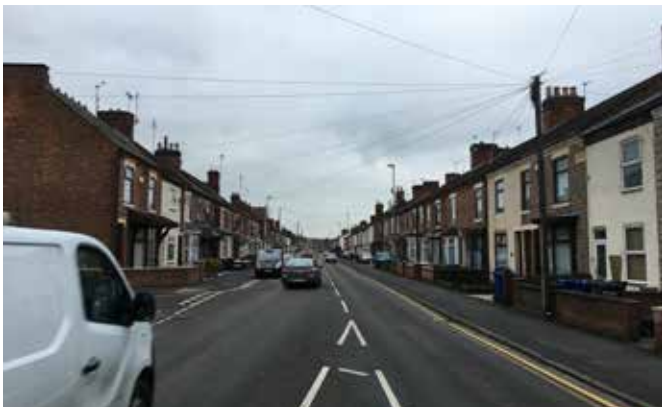
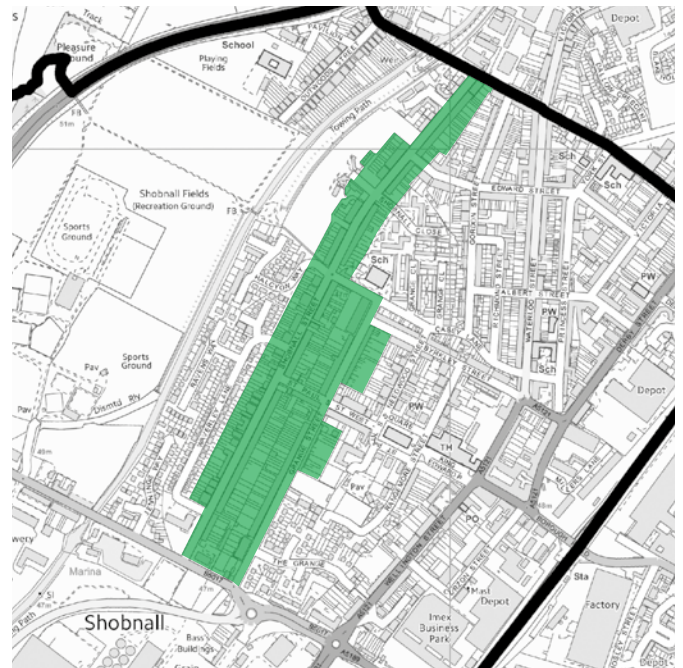




# RESIDENTIAL SPINE

Shobnall Street  
Grange Street

Similar in many respects to the traditional terraces that surround them, Shobnall Street and Grange Street are distinguished by the through flow of traffic along slightly wider roads. In terms of the block structure this means that spanning the road the houses on each side are further apart, lessening the sense of enclosure. Parking difficulties common to all terraced streets without off street parking bays are increased because of the difficulty of pulling out or parking in traffic.







# TRADITIONAL TERRACES

Gordon Street, Princess Street, Edward Street, Albert Street, York Street  
Casey Lane, Byrkley Street

The terraced streets at the heart of north Shobnall share a strong sense of identity, with a closely-knit block structure adding to a pleasing sense of enclosure on the streets which make up the area. Generally fronting directly onto the pavement and sharing a common roof-line, the homes are non the less distinguished by a selection of finishings including brickwork or differently coloured rendering, and doorways and windows have also often been adapted to the owners preferences.

Traffic calming measures are common on many of the intersections in the tight pattern of streets, and as is the case along the 'residential spine' car parking outside houses can be a problem and partially block pavements for wheelchair users or parents pushing prams (it was noted during the study that mobility scooters tended to use the road rather than the pavement).







# TERRACE RENOVATIONS

Gordon Street  
Richmond Street

Residences show a high degree of uniformity, creating a pleasant and visually appealing sense of enclosure around a tight street pattern. Elongated terraced blocks are either half rendered, fully rendered or retain original decorative brickwork, with consistent use of window design and even door colour on certain blocks. Roof lines, down pipes and chimney design and spacing are highly consistent only interrupted by occasional satellite dishes on western frontages.







# MODERN INFILL DEVELOPMENT

## The Grange Rangemore Street (southern end)

Bounded on four sides by the municipal centre, Grange Street, Wellington Street and Shobnall Road, The Grange and the southern end of Rangemore Street feature late 20th century two storey semi-detached houses and bungalows arranged around a curved street pattern with disappearing sight lines and culs-de-sac.

The houses share a uniformed design vocabulary with flat flush windows and plain or two-toned brickwork, with darker coloured facings to the upper floor. Buildings stand at street level or slightly below, and are separated from the pavement by shared lawns with occasional trees and hedges providing privacy to the rear of houses from the road. Many houses have driveways and the area seems well kept.





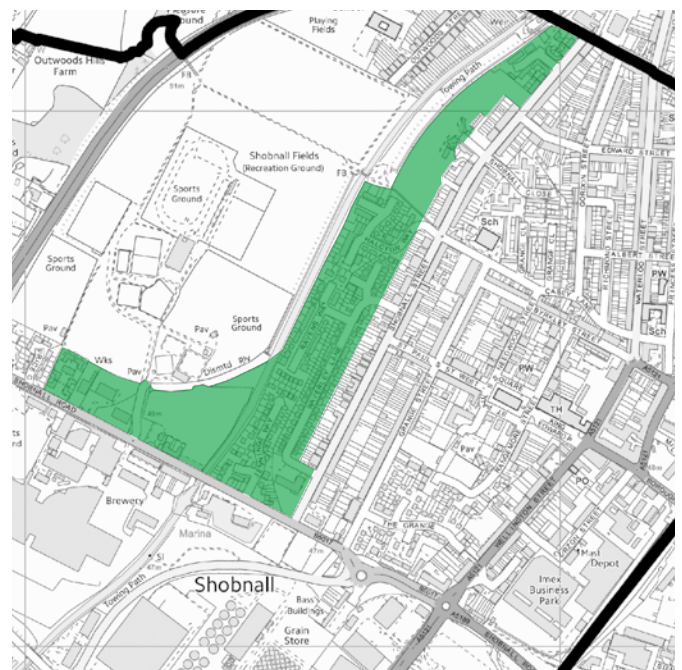


# MODERN CANALSIDE HOMES

Waverley Lane, Jennings Way, Lyne Court, Ravens Way, Halcyon Way  
Bridgewater Road, Curtis Way, Saw Mill Way, Pipers Way

Modern detached, semi-detached and three storey town houses and bungalows arranged around cul-de-sac dominate some of the newest additions to Shobnall's housing stock - all built in the vicinity of the Bridgewater Canal. These developments range in age from Waverley Lane built in the 1980s through to the recently constructed Saw Mill Way and just completed Bridgewater Road.

Architecturally, the buildings are quite varied, with strikingly modern town houses with balconies on Saw Mill Road, to more traditional two storey semis on Curtis Way and Ravens Way. All are well maintained and while the buildings may be regimented, the opportunity for tasteful personalisation has been taken up by many of the home owners. Patterned brickwork distinguish some of the buildings, particularly notably on Pipers Way.







# POST-WAR MUNICIPAL HOUSING

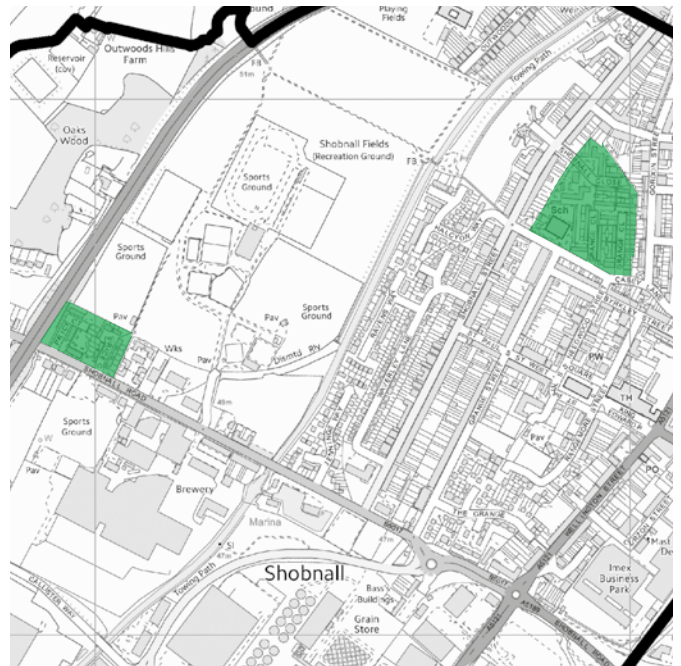
## Price Court, Shobnall Close Grange Close

The age of these social housing developments range over several decades from the 1950s to the later part of the last century and exhibit different and sometimes striking designs.

Price Court off Shobnall Road creates an enclosed square of three storey town houses with the top floor contained within the steeply raking roof line. Each front door has a built in veranda, and on the inside wall facing the square each home enjoys its own private outdoor space.

Shobnall Close predominantly consists of three storey flats, with connected indoor walkways with decorated wooden facings beneath some of the windows, providing some pattern and definition to the buildings. Lawns and occasional trees separate the buildings that are angled away from the road which runs diagonally through much of the development. Communal outdoor off-street parking bays are interspersed through the public areas and the development is also well connected to other parts of the parish by several paths.

Grange Close shares a similar construction to nearby Shobnall Close although the homes are two storey and arranged in straight blocks onto the roadway with small individual front gardens separated by low fencing.







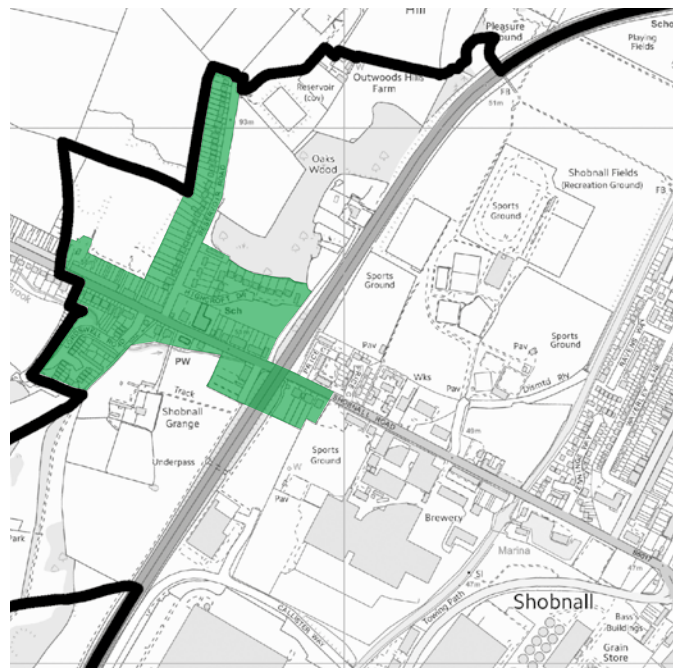
# RURAL EDGE WEST SHOBNALL

**Shobnall Road, Reservoir Road  
Highcroft Drive, Lordswell Road**

Located predominantly to the north and west of the point where the A50 flyover crosses Shobnall Road, houses are larger and set further back from the road, and all enjoy the proximity to open countryside. Generally detached or semi-detached, buildings often have large bay windows, and are less uniform in design.

On Shobnall Road and the steeply inclined Reservoir Road, the late 18th century houses have decorative brickwork, stone lintels and front gardens often have driveways and are generally enclosed by garden walls. Whereas the gardens of the more modern housing on Lordswell Road still enjoy driveways and built in garages, but have open lawned front gardens inclined upward towards the houses from the pavement.

While traffic levels are low on Reservoir Road, Highcroft Drive and Lordswell Road, largely limited to residents travelling too and from their properties outside of school hours, Shobnall Road experiences considerable traffic flows as a through route, including many commercial vehicle movements into and out of Burton on Trent.





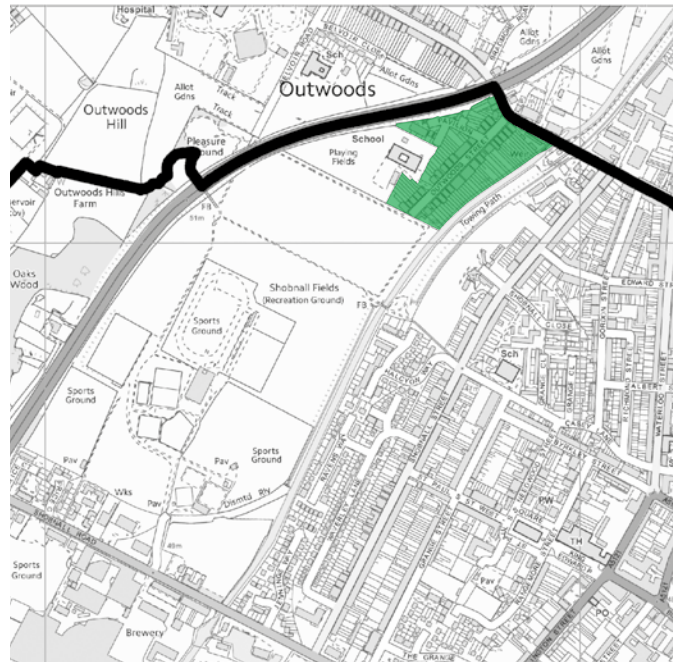


# NORTH SHOBNALL VILLAS

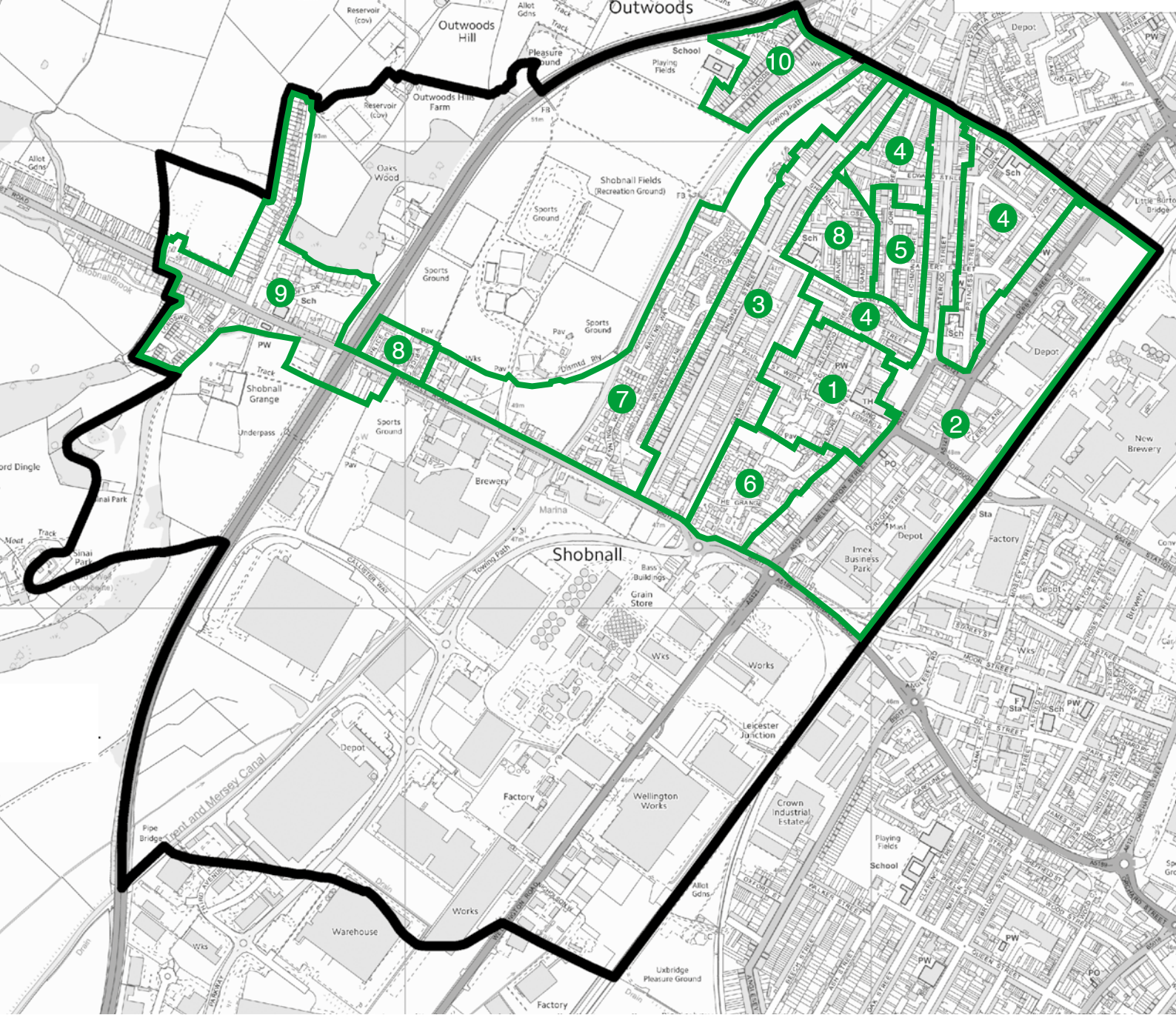
## Outwoods Street Pavilion Grove

Separated from the rest of Shobnall by the Bridgewater Canal, Outwoods Street and Pavilion Grove is non the less part of the parish rather than the nearby Outwoods and can be accessed via the canal bridge on Dallow Road.

This is an attractive area of late 19th century semi-detached villas with long back gardens reaching down to the canal bank. Stone lintels above arched doorways and upper floor windows, and ground floor bay windows are characteristic of the built form in the area. Consideration could be given to designating Outwoods Street a conservation area, to give greater protection to the original elements of the road.



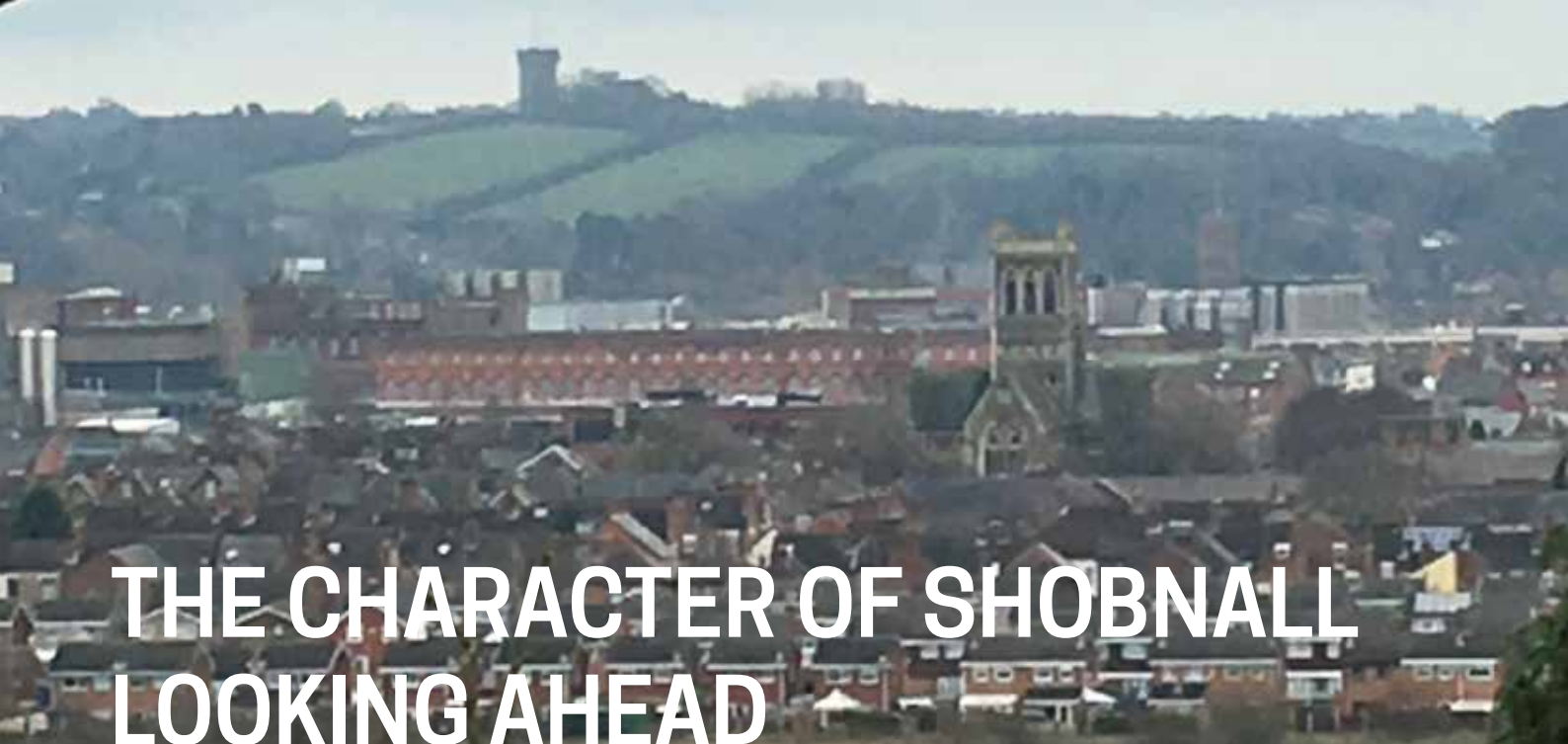




## SHOBNALL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREAS

- |                               |                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Municipal centre     | <b>6</b> Modern infill development    |
| <b>2</b> Commercial spine     | <b>7</b> Modern canalside development |
| <b>3</b> Residential spine    | <b>8</b> Post war municipal housing   |
| <b>4</b> Traditional terraces | <b>9</b> Rural edge west Shobnall     |
| <b>5</b> Terrace renovations  | <b>10</b> North Shobnall villas       |





# THE CHARACTER OF SHOBNALL LOOKING AHEAD

This character assessment should be a useful basis for guiding development of any new housing within Shobnall. Taking various aspects of the character in turn it is possible to draw a variety of conclusions and make various recommendations which, when combined with sound urban design principles in a comprehensive urban design strategy, would deliver development in keeping with the character of the local area.

**Building typologies:** If new housing is to reflect the existing housing in Shobnall then there is a wide variety of existing housing that it could reflect. A variety of building typologies are found throughout Shobnall including detached, semi-detached, terraced, town houses and flats. As such none of the typologies would be out of place but clearly the mix will depend on the density required with flats and terraces being generally higher density although three storey town houses mean that higher density need not mean small housing.

**Landscape and Green Space:** A green setting for the housing would reflect the greenery of existing estates and the rural and canal side setting while providing important recreational opportunities. Some green space would be required by East Staffordshire Local Plan policies and there is an opportunity to link any such space with the countryside beyond visually and perhaps physically also and this should be an aspiration. Green spaces in Shobnall are generally tidy, well maintained and semi-formal with play facilities although perhaps lacking in benches.

**Views and vistas:** Shobnall offers the possibility of great views and vistas of the surrounding countryside and canal, with especially commanding vistas to be observed from the area around Reservoir Road.

**Enclosure:** There is generally good enclosure on existing estates and the townscape benefits as a result. The importance of good enclosure should not be underestimated and can be created by the orientation of buildings as well as boundary treatments and trees.

**Access:** There should ideally be more than one way in and out of any new development with perhaps extra access for pedestrians and cyclists. Access to various parts of the town should be considered.

**Movement:** Generally there is a clear hierarchy in the area with main routes, such as Shobnall Road, Shobnall Street, Wellington Street and Derby Street running through the settlement and with access roads off them through the adjacent housing estates with a combination of straight terraced streets, loop roads and culs-de-sac. While culs-de-sac limit movement which can cause problems with lack of natural surveillance where they are long and isolated, that does not appear to be the case in Shobnall and the culs-de-sac enable development in what would otherwise be difficult areas to access and are generally short with good visibility.



**Legibility:** Legibility is the ability of an area to be understood by people so that they know where they are and can find their way around. Areas that have insufficient legibility can feel soulless and samey and be confusing even stressful. Clear visual cues as to where you are such as edges, nodes, landmarks, distinct areas and paths (which include roads as well as footpaths) enable legibility. Views and gateways can also help. Shobnall generally is very legible with clear edges such as Derby Road, distinct character areas as identified in this assessment, nodes of activity around the shops, pubs, schools and factories, a few local landmarks and a clear movement hierarchy. While any new development should reflect the surrounding area it should also be instantly recognisable as different. This can be done through use of materials such as colour of brick, detailing of houses, enclosure, density, building and roof lines and landmarks either new or existing. People should know which part of Shobnall they are in, and clear gateways and views of other areas of town can assist in achieving this aim.

**Lighting:** Does not vary in terms of lamp post design and would not suggest anything different but modern lamps providing better visibility and reduced energy costs would seem obvious choices.

**Security:** Good quality street lighting helps security and the feeling of security. Natural surveillance is important for security which is what you get when people can see what is happening so that there are fewer opportunities for people to hide and undertake criminal activity or anti-social behaviour. This is enabled by the fact that there most houses appear to back onto other houses.

**Mix of uses:** With the traditional industry still present, Shobnall is a residential area with considerable local employment opportunities and a mixed rural/urban character. While the area still retains its rural proximity, this is as a backdrop being physically separated from the housing although linked visually via green space and views in some areas.

**Public/private interface and front gardens and defensible space:** The public/private interface is clear in some areas within Shobnall and less distinct or lacking in others. Some houses have defensible space in front of them in the form of a front garden, while others have communal areas of lawn or front directly onto the road. The exceptions are the flats with parking courts on Shobnall Close and Price Court and the apartments on Hendeley Court. Front gardens in Shobnall vary in size and boundary treatment. In a higher density arrangement it would seem appropriate to go for the lower end and to not have boundary treatments as these would reduce garden

space further and in a high density area there would be less need for boundary treatments for creating a sense of enclosure.

**Parking:** Off street parking is common in some areas of Shobnall including driveways, garages and parking courts. However, in terraced areas on street parking dominate causing parking problems in the evening and an inherent safety hazard.

**Materials:** Various coloured bricks are found in Shobnall and houses within an estate may vary. Some houses have brick and/or stone detailing such as lintels and quoins. Various colours of roof tiles are visible. In any new development, a variety of brick colours and detailing such as occasional use of patterned brick work, quoins, corbels and roofing materials could be used to help define and distinguish various areas while reflecting existing development in the rest of the parish.

**Height/Scale:** Houses vary from bungalows to three storey townhouses but most are two storeys.

**Building lines:** These vary throughout the area. There are consistent building lines on straight roads but these give way where buildings are staggered on curves in order to orient them towards the road. New development can make use of building lines or lack of them to help define and distinguish various areas.

**Roof lines:** There are strong roof lines throughout most of Shobnall with some exceptions. New development can make use of roof lines or lack of them to help define and distinguish various areas.

**Rhythms:** There are some strong rhythms created by the spacing of houses, windows and doors in certain areas such as Richmond Street and St Paul's Street West. Strong rhythms can create a sense of unity in an area and new development could use this to help define and distinguish areas.

**Windows and Doors:** There are a variety of doors and windows in Shobnall and their treatments help define different areas. For example there are many stone lintels on Shobnall Road and porches are common throughout the parish. Variations in windows and doors can be used to define and distinguish areas within new development while also reflecting nearby development.

**Bin Storage:** Requirements have changed since much of the older housing in Shobnall was built, but there are measures that can be taken to help keep bins out of sight including special bin storage areas to the rear or sides of buildings.



