



CHARACTER APPRAISAL FOR HARVINGTON

JANUARY 2008



HARVINGTON CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

January 2008

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WyreForest District Council (2007)
Planning, Health and Environment Division, Duke House,
Clensmore Street., Kidderminster, DY10 2JX. Tel: 01562 732536

1. INTRODUCTION

Harvington Conservation Area (the Area) was designated by Wyre Forest District Council in 1991. It is situated about three miles south east of Kidderminster in the county of Worcestershire.

The Conservation Area encompasses a small agricultural hamlet focused upon the medieval Harvington Hall, together with its setting

This document aims to set out the special characteristics of the Conservation Area which are desirable to preserve and enhance. The character appraisal will be of interest and use to those involved with development and use of the area, and that adjoining it.

The Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004) contains policies, outlined in Appendix 1 of this document, to assist in preserving and enhancing Conservation Areas within the District: these will be used when considering any development or other proposals within the defined boundaries of this Conservation Area. Appendix 2 of this document shows the boundary of the Conservation Area in map form, together with a number of the features referred to in this document.

2. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The first Conservation Areas were designated under the Civic Amenities Act (1967). This Act was superseded by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69 of this later Act imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to identify areas that are of special architectural or historic interest, where it is desirable to preserve and enhance the character and appearance, and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) *Planning and the Historic Environment* gives further guidance on Conservation Areas, their designation and their assessment, and clarifies the legal responsibilities of both owners of properties within Conservation Areas, and the Local Authorities whose areas the Conservation Area falls within.

The General Permitted Development Order 1995 (GPDO) classes a Conservation Area as being “Article 1(5) land”. Whilst planning permission is not required for many types of works outside such areas, control is given to Local Authorities for works being undertaken within Conservation Areas, including, but not exclusively, the enlargement of a dwelling-house, the rendering of such properties, and the installation of antennae and satellite dishes.

The Adopted Wyre Forest District Local Plan (January 2004) contains various policies describing the aims and objectives of the Local Authority with relation to the wider historic environment and in particular to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation areas within the District. These policies are contained within Appendix 1 of this Appraisal.

It should be noted here that it is not only buildings that are protected when a Conservation Area is designated – trees are also given some protection. Furthermore, PPG 15 also

advises that highway work should reflect the need to protect the historic environment, including road building and highway maintenance.

English Heritage published new guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals in February 2006. In preparing this draft Appraisal, regard has been given to this guidance; likewise, the public consultation was undertaken in accordance with these guidelines.

3. ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

3.1 Setting and topography

Harvington is situated approximately 3 miles east of Kidderminster in the parish of Chaddesley Corbett. The Conservation Area covers an area of 4.6 hectares and is set amidst agricultural land, approached by a narrow winding lane running off the main road from Kidderminster to Bromsgrove.

Harvington Hall stands on a triangular-shaped island with an attendant malt house and chapel. It is surrounded by a roughly square moat traversed by two stone bridges. The site is a scheduled ancient monument and the Hall is Grade I listed. Harvington Hall is open to the public and is renowned as having one of the finest surviving series of priest's hiding places in England.



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Aerial view of the Conservation Area

3.2 *Historic Evolution*

The name Harvington is Anglo-Saxon, and is recorded in the 1086 Domesday Book under the manor of Chadesley Corbett. Archaeological evidence suggests that the square moat and its platform, upon which the current Hall stands, were in existence by the 13th century.

One of the earliest structures on the site is believed to have been timber framed, standing on a sandstone foundation and roofed with stone tiles. Some timber framing is still present within the current Hall and this is believed to date to the 14th century.

Documents from 1270 onwards record the manor in the ownership of the de Herwyntons until 1344, when it passed to Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. It remained as part of the Warwick estate for almost 200 years until it was bought by John Packington in 1529. It is believed that it was under the ownership of Packington's son and grandson that substantial alterations were carried out in the 16th century. During these alterations the plan form of Harvington Hall was totally altered, giving an asymmetrical house, entered through a bridge over the moat which led into a courtyard, with the main house on the left. Parts of the medieval building were incorporated into the new building with the timber framing encased in brick. It is likely that the Malt House was constructed during this period. The Packington family owned and resided at Harvington Hall until 1696 when it passed to the Throckmorton family.

During the early 18th century the west and north sides of the courtyard were demolished. An estate map of 1745-1746 by Thomas Thorp provides an insight into the layout of the Area during the mid 18th century. It shows for example, a Bowling Green, situated in part of what is now the Hall's front lawn. It also shows the Great Garden enclosed by its Elizabethan brick wall. Two small buildings, now demolished, occupied the edge of the island between the Malthouse and the Chapel. The Chapel had been converted from the upper floor of a range of farm buildings in 1743.

In 1825 the Chapel was replaced by a new church, built opposite the Hall, with a Priest's House built adjacent to it in 1838. The former chapel was subsequently used as a school until 1913. During the 19th century the Hall became neglected and gradually stripped of much of its furniture, fixtures and fittings. In 1923 Mrs Ellen Ryan Ferris purchased the site and gave it to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham which later consolidated into the Birmingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustees under whose ownership it remains.

Since 1930 programmes of restoration and preservation have been carried out and the Hall has been opened to the public. After restoration in the 1980s the Chapel, in the Hall grounds, has been used again for worship.

3.3 Land-uses

- Residential: there are a small number of dwellings based around Harvington Hall Farm on the eastern side of the Area,
- Religious: Harvington is considered to be strongly linked with the Catholic history of the Midlands. The priest holes at Harvington Hall are one of the finest remaining examples in the country. There are also several places of worship at Harvington. The Hall housed its own chapel until the 18th century when a separate, but discreet chapel was built on the moated island, and in 1825 St Mary's Catholic Parish Church was built opposite the Hall,



Left, the 18th century Chapel, right, 19th century St Mary's Church

- Tourism: Harvington Hall is open to the public which adds to the profile of the Area. It attracts over 20, 000 visitors a year, making it a valuable attraction to the local area and to the wider Wyre Forest District. St Mary's Roman Catholic Church also provides a place of interest to visit. The picturesque hamlet and the peaceful nature of the surrounding area encourages visitors.
- The majority of land within the Parish is used for agriculture, horticulture and farming.

3.4 Colours

Colours within the Area are provided by both the built and natural environment. Harvington Hall is a prominent feature and its warm and mellow red brick and red tile roof is a major contributor to colour within the Area. This is enhanced by the presence of other red brick buildings within the vicinity. The presence of red sandstone on several of the buildings in the Area also contributes to the Area's colour.

The grasses and trees within the Area, and the views out across the agricultural landscape also provides colour to the Area which changes dependent on the season.



Colour within the Area is provided by both the built and natural environment

3.5 *Climate*

The surrounding countryside creates the setting for the Area and is heavily influenced by the climate, which changes scenery, colours and views with the seasons.

3.6 *Green Spaces*

a) Trees

Trees are an important component of the character and appearance of the Area. Aerial views of the Area show the high density of trees surrounding the Hall, which has the effect of hiding the Hall from view from outside the Area. Trees and hedgerows are also used to provide some privacy for Harvington Hall Farm and associated buildings.

The stump of an elm tree on the border of Harvington Hall car park is all that remains of what was once an avenue of elms that marked one of the approaches to the Hall.

There is one Tree Preservation Order in the Area which covers three pine trees outside the Church. Trees within the Area and not covered by a Tree Preservation Order are still afforded some protection through the Conservation Area designation.



Examples of how trees in the Area provide both interest and colour and also serve as a screen, hiding buildings from view

b) Parks and Gardens

The moat surrounding Harvington Hall is a highly important landscape feature within the Area. The moat has been present since the 13th century and was originally the second of a chain of five pools, three of which still hold water. The national importance of the moat and fishponds is recognised through its entry on the Schedule of Monuments (the only legal protection specifically for archaeological sites).

The Estate Map of 1745-6 shows a large walled garden, which is believed to have been constructed during the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century. By the 1884 First Edition Ordnance Survey map the enclosure is shown to be laid out as an orchard. The walls of the garden survive. The section of the garden that belongs to the Priest House has been retained as a garden, but the other half has now been given over for use as an overspill car park.

There is a sizeable area of open space to the fore of the Hall beyond the moat. Although a relatively recent development, it was landscaped in 1949, this lawned section is an important component of the Hall's setting and of the Area's character.

The herb garden in the south-east angle of the moat has recently been restored and replanted.



*Top left to right, the moat, the lawned section in front of Harvington Hall,
Bottom left to right, the Walled Garden, the herb garden*

3.7 Historic pattern and movement

Harvington Hall and its estate has been the principal focus of activity within the Area since the 13th century and therefore provided the main influence on pattern and movement within the Area. Surrounding buildings would have served the needs of the Hall, typically as agricultural buildings or cottages for estate workers. From the 16th century the religion of the household would also have had an influence on movement within the Area, from sheltering Priests to providing a Chapel to enable worship in the Catholic faith. Harvington's association with Catholic history continues, represented by the Annual Pilgrimage to Harvington for a mass in honour of the English Martyrs. This pilgrimage continues a tradition that dates back to the late 19th century. St Mary's Catholic Church at Harvington is also the Catholic parish church.

Although the Hall fell out of use, its restoration and opening to the public have meant that the Hall is once more a focus for movement within the Area.

3.8 Illumination and night-time appearance

There is no street lighting in the Area, which helps it retain a rural and uncluttered feel.

3.9 Views

The views into and out of the Area provide important links between the hamlet and its surroundings.

a) Into the Area

Views into the Area are fairly limited as the Hall and surrounding buildings are shielded from the approach road to the north by trees, while from the approach road to the south, views are partially shielded by the Walled Garden.

Glimpses into the Area can be gained from the footpath that skirts the outside of the moat and the Monarch's Way footpath which provides a glimpse to the range of farm buildings that lie on the eastern side of the Area.



View into the Area from the Monarch's Way footpath

b) Out of the Area

The views out of the Area reinforce the sense of the rural location of the hamlet. Views across agricultural land can be gained from many parts of the Area including from the south bridge of the Hall. The south east part of the Area affords views across to Chaddesley Corbett, identifiable by St Cassian's church spire.



View out of the Area towards Chaddesley Corbett

c) Views within the Area

Views within the Area are limited. Glimpses of the Hall can be gained when approaching from the lane from the north west, but it is not until the final corner is breached that the Hall and the Church can be clearly seen.

The buildings that lie to the east of the Area are partially screened from view by hedgerows and trees.



Views within the Area are often limited

3.10 *Style of buildings*

The predominant type of building within the Area is agricultural, from Harvington Hall Farmhouse and its associated buildings to the now disused Malthouse. These buildings are vernacular in style. The pattern of studs on the timber framing of the Malthouse and the diagonal brick noggin have both been described as vernacular features typical of the region.

An example of polite architecture can be found in the Area in the form of the Priest's House with its classically proportioned design.

The style of Harvington Hall itself ranges from medieval to Elizabethan with 18th and 19th century additions.



Left, the Malthouse, right the Priest's House

3.11 *Size and morphology of buildings*

As with most historic settlements, the size of a building is largely dictated by its historic use.

The largest building within the Area and the most visually dominant, is Harvington Hall. Its plan form has undergone several alterations during its history with both extension and some demolition having taken place, dependent upon fashion and the needs of the household.

3.12 *Materials and construction*

a) Walls and construction methods

The principal building material within the Area is red brick, often warm red or warm orange red in colour with a range of bonded constructions. It has been suggested that the bricks for use at the Hall were fired in two fields to the northeast of the Hall. When brick is used as a material it is often used in conjunction with sandstone.

Sandstone is a material often found within the Area, the quarries for which, can still be seen. Buildings that have used sandstone include St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church which is faced with sandstone ashlar and surrounded by a sandstone wall. Sandstone is also used for plinths and dressings,

There are also examples of timber framing within the Area, some such as the Malthouse have been left exposed, while other timber framed buildings such as Harvington Hall Farm have been clad in brick. The barn about 20 metres north of Harvington Hall Farmhouse has had its oak timber framed exterior surfaced in elm boarding. However, within the Area the facing material is typically left untreated which emphasises the natural colours of the sandstone and brick.



Examples of construction methods within the Area

b) Windows

There is a variety of window types within the Area and range from stone mullioned windows, to side hung casements, to sash windows and to Y tracery found at the Church. Window dressings also vary and include plastered wedge lintels and segmental heads.

Windows are predominantly constructed in timber or metal. The Area is enhanced through the lack of use of Upvc, which due to the material and finish is not considered appropriate for historic properties.

The variation in the type, construction and finishing details of the windows assist in creating the Area's character.



A selection of windows from within the Area

c) Doors

The Area also contains a variety of doors and surrounds that range from simple boarded doors to half glazed and fully glazed doors. Some of the doors date back to the 17th and 18th centuries and include interesting detail such as the leaf-head strap hinges found at the Malthouse. Door surrounds include flat canopys, tiled gabled canopys and wooden architrave.

The traditional doors found within the Area compliment the historic character of the hamlet.



A selection of doors within the Area

d) Roofs

Most of the roofs in the Area are gabled, the pitch of which are generally steep varying between 40 and 45 degrees. A noticeable exception is the Priest's House which has a hipped roof.

Roofing materials in the area are predominantly tile and range from hand made red clay tile to machine tile. Again the Priest's House provides the exception with its slate roof.

The roofing materials provide a textual richness to the Area, with the irregularity and undulating unevenness of the hand made clay tiles adding to the historic character of the Area.



An example of the roofing materials found within the Area

e) Rainwater goods

Rainwater goods are traditionally cast iron, predominantly in half-round profile for guttering. Of particular interest are the lead rainwater goods at Harvington Hall, particularly that on the north side of the Hall with its dated hopper head and decorated downspouts. A more modern version of which can be found on the south side.

f) Boundary walls, copings and railings

There are several prominent boundary walls within the Area including:

- The Churchyard wall, is grade II listed and is an early 19th century sandstone ashlar. There are two gateways on north side, each with square gate piers with pyramidal caps.
- The Garden wall, to the south of the Priest's House is also listed and is about 2 metres high and encloses the west, east and south sides of the garden west of the Priest's House. It is brick with brick and stone coping. The walls are believed to date from the late 16th, early 17th century and enclosed the "Great Garden" shown on the 1745-6 Estate Map.
- The hedgerows along the narrow lanes that lead into the Area enhance the sense of enclosure and visually narrow the carriageway which has the potential to reduce the speed of traffic entering into the Area. The high verges have restricted kerbside parking which helps to retain the rural character of the Area



*Top left, the churchyard wall, top right the Garden Wall,
bottom, hedgerows on approach to the Area*

3.13 *Survival of architectural features*

The Area has retained many original architectural features. These include:

- The lead downpipe and hopper at Harvington Hall,
- Traditional roofs and roof coverings
- Traditional windows in doors, both in traditional materials and designs
- The moat
- The Garden Wall



Lead downpipe and hopper at Harvington Hall

3.14 *Landmarks, focal points and special features*

a) Landmarks

Landmarks are buildings, structures, or other features that are important because of their size, design or position makes them particularly noticeable. Landmarks in the Area include the following:

- Harvington Hall – the Hall is the principal landmark within the Area by virtue of its size, design and position,
- The Priest's House – this is a landmark by virtue of its height and design, with its imposing elevation when viewed from the south



Harvington Hall is the principle landmark of the Area

b) Focal Points

Focal points are buildings, structures or areas that are important because of their position in view lines, or because they are the centre of well-frequented public activity. Focal points include the following:

- Harvington Hall - the Hall is open to the public and is therefore a centre of public activity although the extent can vary dependent on the time of the year,
- St Mary's Roman Catholic church - the church is the Catholic parish church and has provided a place for worship since 1825 and in doing so continues a tradition for Catholic worship at Harvington.
- The Wain House – the Wain House is a focal point because its position punctuates the end of a view line.
- The Garden Wall – the height of the Wall means that it is noticeable from various points within the Area and when approaching from the south east it is a noticeable feature of the landscape. It also serves an important function of screening the overspill car park,
- The moat and associated pools – serve as a focal point within the landscape of the Hall, this focal point is further enhanced by the presence of waterfowl,
- The 18th century chapel - the chapel is one of the first buildings that can be seen when approaching from the north west. Its reflection in the stillness of the moat further enhances its status as a focal point.



Focal points in the Area include the moat, the Wain House and the 18th century chapel

c) Special Features

One of the key characteristics of the Area is the high quality and historic interest of the structures within it. There are twelve Statutory List Entries within the Area. Harvington Hall is Grade I listed which denotes the Hall as being of ‘exceptional interest.’ It is one of only six Grade I listed buildings in the District. The Hall and moat have also been scheduled as an Ancient Monument. Scheduling is only applied to archaeological sites of national interest.



One of the quarries within the Area.

The two quarries in the Area are also special features due to their association with the redevelopment of the Hall in the 16th century. One of the quarries was even subsequently used as the dog kennels for the Hall.

Other special features that are vitally important in retaining the character and appearance of the Area include the views out to the countryside and the trees and hedges in the Area.

3.15 Ground Surfaces

There are several types of ground surface with the Area. These include;

- Grass: From the lawned area in front of, and to the rear of, Harvington Hall to the grass lined roadside edges and the overspill car park, grass forms a substantial part of the ground cover within the Area.
- Water: The presence of the moat and fishponds means that water is a significant ground surface, that has been associated with the Area for centuries,
- Gravel: Used in the centre of the Area to denote the parking area. The informal use of its layout, appearance and the material, minimises the potential impact that a parking area could have,
- Standard tarmacadam: used on the approach roads into the hamlet

3.16 Hard landscaping/street furniture

Hard landscaping and street furniture have been kept to a minimum within the Area. Highway signs are present on approach to the hamlet and are related to speed restrictions. Other signs in the Area that relate to either the Hall or the Church are painted a dark red which provides some continuity within the Area. The signs are well maintained, limited in number and removable, all of which helps to negate the potential negative impact that they could have on the Area.



Example of signs present outside Harvington Hall

Benches are restricted to the back of the Hall forming an attractive picnic area.

3.17 *Tranquil areas and active areas*

The rural setting of the hamlet and the small number of buildings within the Area ensures that the Area enjoys relative tranquillity despite being a popular visitor attraction. The car park within the centre of the Area provides an active area, serving both the needs of the Hall and the Church. While particular tranquil areas include the moat, especially where the moat broadens out into a small lake with waterfowl and course fishing.

Harvington Hall Lane, the narrow lane which passes through the Area is used by commuter traffic on weekdays during the early part of the day and again around 17.00-17.30. This disturbs the tranquillity of the Area and is potentially dangerous for pedestrians.



Examples of tranquil and active areas

3.18 *Noise*

On the whole the Area is quiet and peaceful with noise reflecting its rural location. The Area is situated far enough away from the main road that the noise of vehicular traffic is kept to a minimum although this level of noise increases during commuter times and when the Hall is open. Other noise includes human conversation which is especially focused in social areas such as the Hall and the Church.

3.19 Paths

There are two paths that run at the edge of the Area, one runs from the Walled Garden and skirts the moat, providing views of Harvington Hall, the moat, and views towards Harvington. The second, is part of the ‘Monarch’s Way’ footpath which follows the escape route of Charles II after his defeat at the Battle of Worcester during the Civil War. This section of the path provides views across to the range of buildings associated with Harvington Hall Farm.

3.20 Alien features

The Area, on the whole, has maintained its “traditional character”. Perhaps the most noticeable alien feature within the Area are the highway signs present when approaching from the south east. The road is flanked by two 30mph signs in addition to a road marking. At this location where the road is narrow and the signs can be clearly seen, it may be more appropriate to only have one sign.



The traffic signs are an alien feature within the Area

4.0 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Harvington Conservation Area is rich in archaeological, historic and architectural interest. This is reflected in the designation of part of the Area as a Scheduled Monument and in the high number of Statutory Listed Structures within the Area. The site has been carefully managed and maintained ensuring that many historic details have been retained.

The rural setting, in addition to the number of trees and hedges found within the Area, further add to the special character and appearance of the Area.

Appendix 1

Adopted Wyre Forest Local Plan Policies

Development in Conservation Areas

Policy CA.1

Development within an existing or proposed Conservation Area, or which affects its setting, or views into or out of the area, will not be permitted unless it includes detailed plans and preserves or enhances, and otherwise harmonises with the special character and appearance of the area. In considering how development meets the above, particular regard will be paid to existing and proposed Conservation Area Character Appraisals.

Demolition in Conservation Areas

Policy CA.2

Proposals for the demolition of a building or structure in a Conservation Area will not be permitted unless it is clearly demonstrated that:

- i) it has no recognised interest in itself or by association, and no value to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area;
- ii) its demolition or replacement would benefit the character or appearance of the Conservation Area; and
- iii) they include detailed and appropriate proposals for redevelopment, together with clear evidence such redevelopment will proceed; or
- iv) it is wholly beyond repair and they include detailed and appropriate proposals for redevelopment, together with clear evidence the redevelopment will proceed.

Shop Fronts in Conservation Areas and in Relation to Listed Buildings

Policy CA.3

Within Conservation Areas and in relation to statutorily and non-statutorily Listed Buildings, shop fronts and their repair must:

- i) minimise the loss of, impact upon and be compatible with, historic fabric;
- ii) be of traditional design, materials and surface finish;
- iii) be of appropriate proportions;
- iv) avoid internally illuminated fascias and other internally illuminated signage, and externally mounted lighting and advertisements;
- v) avoid externally mounted, opaque or incompatibly coloured security shuttering;
- vi) not spread across individual adjoining buildings; and
- vii) otherwise harmonise with the building or structure, its curtilage and setting.

Trees and Hedgerows in Conservation Areas

Policy CA.4

Trees and hedgerows that contribute to the special character, appearance or amenity of Conservation Areas must be retained and not directly or indirectly adversely affected. Appropriate topping, lopping or felling of trees will usually be acceptable if it is essential:

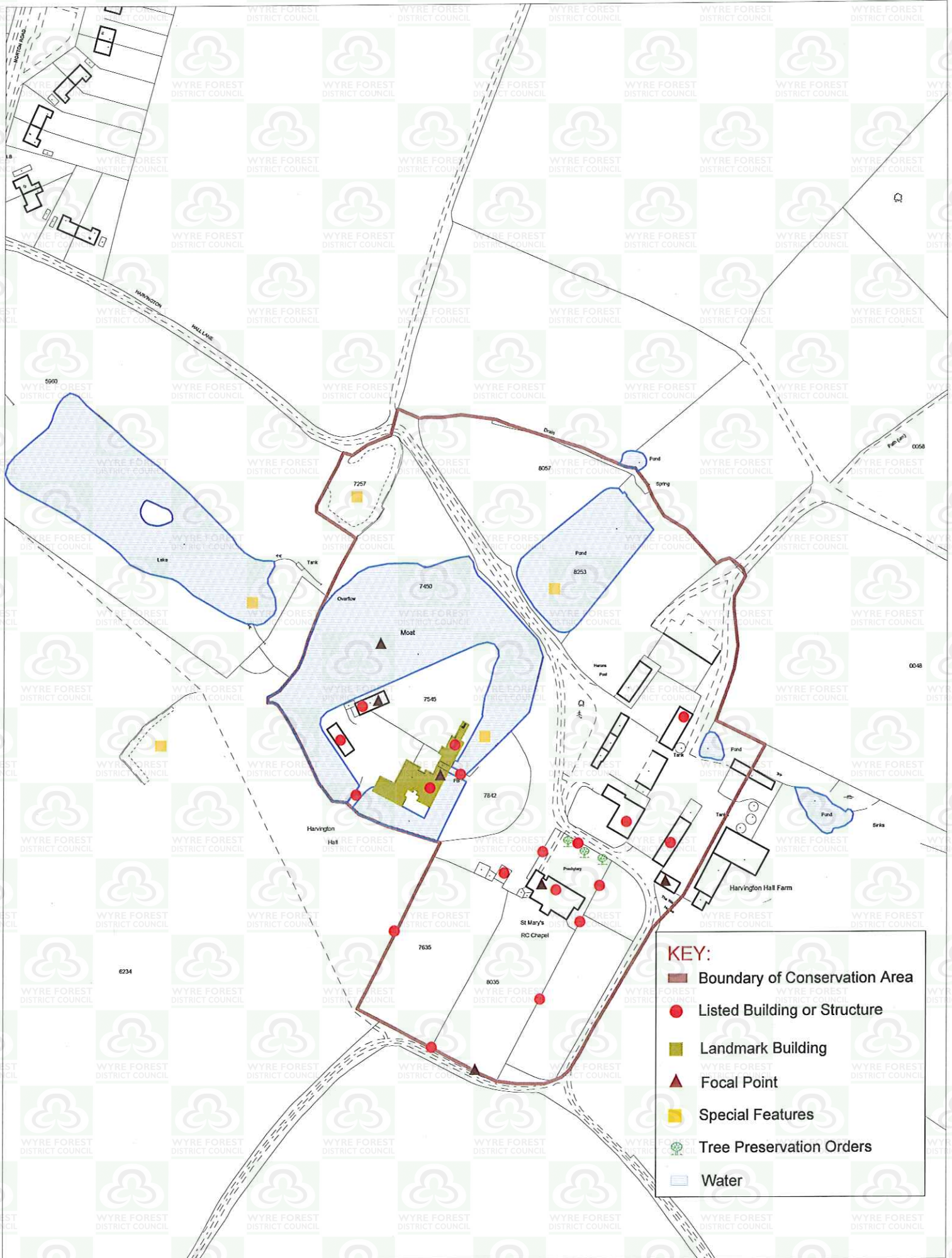
- i) to their health or stability;
- ii) to the safety or condition of buildings, structures or land; or
- iii) would otherwise benefit the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

Care should be taken to conserve root systems. Proposals for felling must be clearly justified and exceptional, and accompanied by appropriate proposals for replanting. Consideration will be given to making Tree Preservation Orders, as appropriate.

Highways Works in Conservation Areas

Policy CA.5

Within and adjoining Conservation Areas, highway works must preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the area.



KEY:

- Boundary of Conservation Area
- Listed Building or Structure
- Landmark Building
- ▲ Focal Point
- Special Features
- 🌳 Tree Preservation Orders
- Water

