

LHECZ 12 – Land around Little Aston

Summary

The historic landscape of this LHECZ was formerly characterised by a small settlement surrounded by dispersed farmsteads and mills set amongst a heavily wooded area. In the 18th century much of the area was formally landscaped as the parkland to Little Aston Hall. Then in the 20th century the landscape was transformed once again by residential developments on the former parkland and the construction of two golf courses.

The boundaries of the LHECZ are formed on the eastern side by the modern boundary between Lichfield District Council and Birmingham City Council and on the western side by the railway.

Medium or large scale development is likely to have some impact upon the historic environment assets of the zone. Any development which may be planned for the zone would need to address impacts upon and potential mitigation strategies for:

- the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings
- the potential for below ground archaeological deposits
- Impact on existing landscaping and parkland

Early consultation with the Conservation Officers at Lichfield District Council, the Cultural Heritage Team at Staffordshire County Council and English Heritage is advised.

Designations

There are 12 Listed Buildings within the LHECZ.

There is one conservation area covering a substantial part of the early 20th century residential development of Little Aston.

There are no other designated sites falling within this LHECZ.

Archaeological Character

The overall character of the wider landscape in the earlier Prehistoric period is likely to have been of a heavily wooded landscape perhaps supporting a pastoral economy from the Bronze Age onwards.

The southern corner of the LHECZ adjoins Sutton Park, much of which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument due to its extensive archaeological remains dating from all periods from the Neolithic to the industrial period.

Prehistoric archaeological finds within the LHECZ include a Neolithic flint arrowhead and a flint blade dating to between the early Mesolithic and the middle Bronze Age.

The remains of a Roman road, Ryknild Street, runs through Sutton Park and northwards through this LHECZ, some of which is believed to run along a similar line to the modern Roman Road. There is written evidence of parts of the Roman road surviving at surface level within the gardens of two properties until they were demolished to allow the construction of two roads, Stonehouse and Claverdon. Further remains are believed to have been found during the excavation of a gravel pit near the junction of Roman Road and Keepers Road. Therefore while there may be little evidence of the road remaining on the surface there is considerable potential for stratified remains at a lower level.

Ridge and furrow was evident until around 1935 north of Little Aston Lane although this is now underneath the Aston Wood Golf Club.

During field walking and archaeological watching briefs medieval pottery and tile fragments have been found which relate to the original settlement of Little Aston around Forge Lane. This would suggest the potential for further finds and potential archaeological remains within this vicinity.

Historic Landscape

By the 11th century this LHECZ lay within the Royal Forest of Cannock where the landscape was dominated by a mixture of woodland, wood pasture and heathland. There is evidence of some clearance for pasture or even arable farming dating from the Anglo-Saxon period. The first recorded mention of Little Aston as a settlement was in the reign of Henry III (1216-1272)

In the medieval period this LHECZ formed part of a wider landscape of dispersed settlements and this survived in this LHECZ until the late 19th century and the early 20th century when the landscape was transformed by residential developments.

Almost all of the existing landscape within this LHECZ dates to the 20th century although there are important earlier remnants. The only remnant of medieval landscape surviving within this LHECZ is the land between St Peters Church and Walsall Road. Furthermore the line of the Ryknild Street runs across this land and so it is here that archaeological remains are most likely to be found.

Yates map of 1775 shows Little Aston as a large Green, partly surrounded by a road and further surrounded by farmland which was defined by enclosures. From 1838 to the beginning of the 20th century there appears to have been little change in the landscape of Little Aston being characterised by a small settlement surrounded by dispersed farmsteads and mills with large areas of woodland interspersed with streams that fed the mill ponds.

Pockets of 18th-19th century planed field systems survive. These areas are characterised by either small or large fields that share very straight boundaries, giving them a geometric, planned appearance. Laid out by surveyors, these field patterns result from late enclosure during the 18th and

19th centuries. This historic landscape character, therefore, includes commons that were enclosed by Act of Parliament. In Staffordshire the majority of these fields were created out of former commons, heathland or moorland but in some areas they may formerly have been open arable fields dating from the medieval period. The origins of these planned field systems are generally well understood and they often have landscape relations with other important historic landscape elements such as model farms and designed parklands.

Some areas of plantations survive and while many areas within this type date from the 20th century there are some that have an earlier origin and are often associated with historic parks. This appears to be the case within this LHECZ where the surviving plantations relate to Little Aston Hall and as such should be read as part of a historic park and gardens landscape.

There is a large area of modern re-organised fields to the north of this LHECZ and beyond its northern boundary. Many of these field systems date of the modern period (1914-to present). However, most of them were created out of earlier field systems of a variety of dates, but due to intensification in agricultural practices, particularly over the last 50 years, the earlier characteristics have been significantly eroded. This relates in the main to the loss of field boundaries

The historic village of Little Aston is situated to the north of this LHECZ on and around the junction of Forge Lane/Walsall Road and Aldridge Road which was formerly the location of the village Green.

What is now the principle residential area of Little Aston was constructed within the grounds of Little Aston Hall following its sale in 1907. Substantial areas of mature parkland survive and these remain an integral part of the character of the landscape.

Survival	Relatively little of the pre-20 th century area survives although what does survive is of importance.	1
Potential	Significant potential given previous finds and known sites including roman road and proximity to Sutton Park.	2
Documentation	Comprises the HER data and the VCH volume as well as local histories and various archaeological reports.	2
Diversity	The range of assets is limited.	1
Group Association	Contains a limited range of assets although some relate well in date.	2

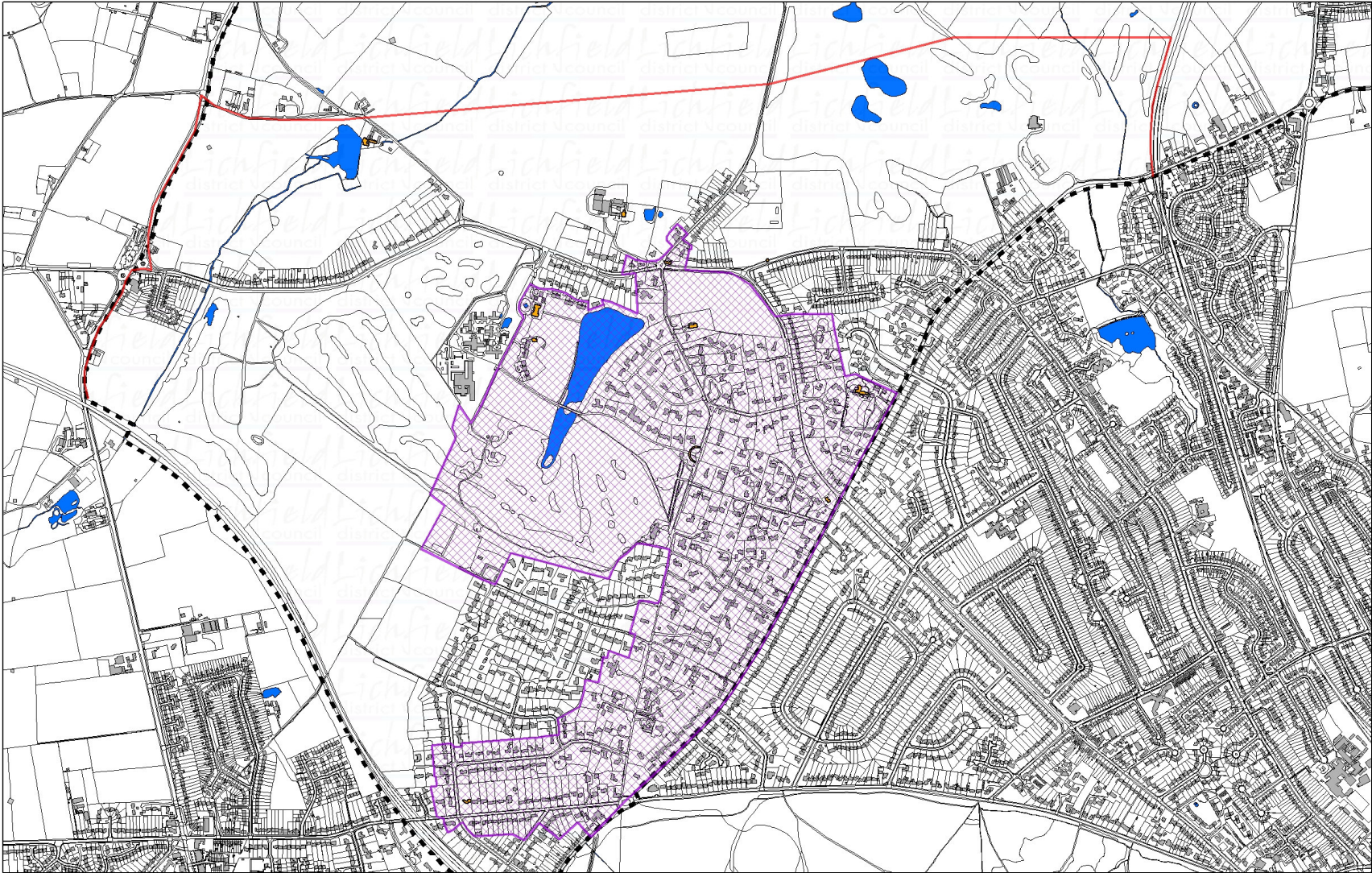
Amenity Value	There are some aspects of the historic environment which contribute to the sense of place and would lend themselves to be promoted as such.	2
Sensitivity	The historic environment of the zone is sensitive to change but should be able to accommodate medium to large scale developments.	2

Overall Score 12

For further information regarding the Historic Environment Record (HER); Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and designated sites please contact:

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**Map 1: LHECZ 12:
Little Aston -
Designated Historic
Environment Assets**

Scale: Not to Scale
Date: April 2009
Drawn By: Debbie Boffin
Drawing No:
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- Key**
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| Listed Buildings | Conservation Areas |
| Grade 1 | Ancient Monuments |
| Grade 2 | HECA boundaries |
| Grade 2* | Lichfield District Boundary |

