



# Tower Square Conservation Area Appraisal

*February 2007*



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# 1. Appraisal Context

- 1.1 This Character Appraisal has been prepared for Tower Square Conservation Area, whose original boundaries were designated in February 1988.
- 1.2 Conservation Areas are designated by Local Authorities under fulfilment of duties imposed by Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This defines Conservation Areas as:

*“areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”*

Special interest may originate from a variety of sources, while character is defined in a holistic sense rather than deriving from the merits of any single building.

- 1.3 Production of Character Appraisals is required under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s *Best Value* initiative (BVPI 219b), though best practice has long required their preparation. The objective of an Appraisal is to analyse and define in depth the special interest and traits which make up the *character* of a Conservation Area, to identify the pressures and challenges facing its survival and to recommend courses of action which will aid in achieving sensitive management, preservation and enhancement (the latter points fulfilling duties imposed by Section 71 of the 1990 Act).
- 1.4 Conservation Area status is a material consideration in the evaluation of planning applications. Here Section 72 of the 1990 Act requires Local Planning Authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of achieving preservation or enhancement through their decision making. Appraisals represent an important resource in fulfilling such duties while Planning Policy Guidance 15, *Planning and the Historic Environment*, provides a principal point of guidance. Where new development is planned Appraisals may provide a useful design resource to those proposing it.
- 1.5 Conservation Area status curtails certain ‘permitted’ householder development rights requiring planning permission to be sought in these areas (outlined in the General Permitted Development Order 1995). Local Authorities have further powers to restrict permitted developments to the forward elevations of properties that front the highway through the introduction of Article 4(2) designations, while approval of the Secretary of State is required for more wide ranging 4(1) designations. Due to the mainly commercial nature of Tower Square Conservation Area it was not considered expedient to put an Article 4 direction in place.
- 1.6 BVPI 219c requires production of distinct Management Strategy documents for each Conservation Area. The basis of these documents is the analysis contained within and recommendations arising from each Appraisal. These documents will provide a boost in efficiency while helping ensure fulfilment of statutory duties. In the context of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) these Management Strategy documents may eventually be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents.

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- 1.7 Work on the new LDF is currently proceeding. In the interim, policies included within the City Plan 2001 continue in force unless superseded by those arising from the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 or Regional Planning Guidance. The City Plan reiterates the Authority's commitment to fulfilling statutory duties regarding Conservation Areas and listed buildings, sets design and development standards, while introduces two non-statutory 'lists' of relevance to this Appraisal: a *Local List* (Buildings of Special Local Interest) and *Areas of Archaeological Importance*.
- 1.8 When reading or using an Appraisal it is important to note that while every effort is made to provide detailed analysis the document can never be comprehensive. Failure to mention a particular element or detail *must not* be taken to imply that it is of no importance to an appreciation of the character or appearance of the Area and thus of no relevance in consideration of planning applications.
- 1.9 This Appraisal has been produced by the Directorate of Regeneration and Heritage (Urban Design and Conservation), Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Enquiries regarding this Appraisal should be addressed to:

The Urban Design Team:

Principal Design and Conservation Officer  
01782 23 2477

Senior Design and Conservation Officer  
01782 23 2154

Design and Conservation Officer  
01782 23 5023

Tree Officer  
01782 23 2556

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## 2. The Study Area

- 2.1 Tunstall sits on one of the highest areas in Stoke-on-Trent just North of Burslem with the valleys of Fowlers brook and Scotia brook running either side. Tower Square (formerly Market Square) is at the heart of Tunstall Town Centre and dates back to the early 1800's.
- 2.2 Tower Square has been the centre of commerce for Tunstall since its inception. The Conservation Area is dominated by retail and commercial uses, with few residential properties. Tunstall generally has small high street shops; national retailers are mainly concentrated in the retail park recently built on the outskirts.
- 2.3 The Conservation Area is tightly drawn around the open square which is dominated by the Town Hall, built along its East side. The Town Hall fronts the Market Hall; they are combined into the largest building within the Conservation Area. It is unusual for the pottery towns to have a formal setting for their Town Halls – most front on to main roads and their potential impact is never fully realised. This architectural set piece is further enhanced by the focal point of the clock tower in the centre.
- 2.4 Traditionally the area was dominated by clay based commercial enterprises such as brick and tile works and pot banks. Almost none of this industry remains today, the area is now predominately retail and residential in character.

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### **3. History and Archaeology**

- 3.1 The prehistory of Tunstall is currently vague, but in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Tunstall Manor or Court was a large estate which included parts of Cheshire and extended as far as Sneyd and Wolstanton. This estate can be traced back as far as 1212 under the overlordship of the Earl of Chester.
- 3.2 Tunstall is one of the youngest towns in the potteries, becoming part of the city in 1910. Tunstall village was described in 1802 as the “pleasantest village in the pottery”<sup>1</sup> because of its elevated situation and views of the surrounding countryside. It developed from a village to a town between 1816 and 1840, improved transport links serving to increase its accessibility and popularity.
- 3.3 The town has a long history of earthenware manufacture with pottery, tiles, bricks, and collieries common and successful in the area. Pottery has been made in Tunstall since the 14<sup>th</sup> century and Enoch Booth, who created ‘creamware’, worked in Tunstall in the 1750’s. Tunstall also had the largest pottery in the area, Greengates Pottery, which was built by celebrated Staffordshire potter William Adams in the 1750’s.
- 3.4 The area has various transport links with Little Chell Lane being one of the oldest roads near the Victoria Park and evident on Yates map of 1775. The road to Congleton was turnpiked to 1770, and the road to Newcastle & Burslem in 1763. The Trent and Mersey Canal which runs in the valley parallel to Tunstall was built 1766-1777.
- 3.5 The Loop railway line was built in 1870 to service the collieries in the area, and then in 1875 a passenger service was introduced. The Loop line included stations at Kidsgrove, Newchapel, Burslem and Hanley. It served as an important connection between the towns and with the passenger service came increased development in the area.
- 3.6 The square was laid out after 1816 when the town began to develop rapidly as potteries, particularly Greengates, flourished. The increasing need for public order and security led to the building of a courthouse, with other public uses and the laying out of a market square. This building became the first Town Hall which was demolished in 1892.
- 3.7 The South side of “Market Square” (now Tower Square) is shown as fully developed by 1822 with shops and houses. The North side is still open, the most important building here being the Sneyd Arms, one of the two coaching inns in the Town dating from the 1820’s.
- 3.8 Tunstall was an early centre of Methodism in the region. The only surviving chapel stands at the West end of the square and was built in 1824. The rest of the site was filled with shops and two houses behind in Paradise Street. The rent from these was intended to support the Chapel.

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<sup>1</sup> Allbuts Directory of the Potteries - 1802

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- 3.9 On the West side of the square the first new streets, Paradise Street and Piccadilly Street, had been completed by 1823. These were, in the main, owned by local tradesmen and were let out to working potters. Two houses partially survive as The Paradise Inn.
  - 3.10 Hargreave's map of 1832 shows the range of shops in Paradise Street at the North West corner to have been completed and the square is now fully enclosed.
  - 3.11 A map of the "Township of Tunstall" by Robert Malabar dated 1848 shows a few changes to the North side of the square; to the East of Calver Street, the corner plot is now shown vacant. This was still the case in 1878, but had been built on by the 1900 O.S. map.
  - 3.12 In the 1850's a new covered market was built at the East end of the square, but by 1880 this was found to be too large as well as structurally faulty. Part of the site (facing the square) was then demolished and the present Town Hall built. It opened in 1885, with the market held in the remaining part of the 1850's building at the rear.
  - 3.13 The clock tower that stands at the centre of the square on the site of the first town hall was built in 1893 and paid for by public subscription in commemoration of the Smith-Child family.
  - 3.14 In the 1940's slum clearance was carried and many original houses were demolished, especially in Roundwell Street. In the 1960's parts of Butterfield Place were cleared to create a car park including the houses behind the town hall and the Market Inn.
  - 3.15 Between 1950 and 1970 the A50 was created to bypass the centre of town and create a clear route though Tunstall. This had the effect of chopping Tunstall in two and today represents the line between the residential and commercial sections of Tunstall.
  - 3.16 The square itself has changed little over recent years with the exception of a revised parking scheme in the 1990's to allow a clearer parking system and revamp the square. The toilets at the West end of the square were also removed about this time. Some of the individual buildings have been rebuilt but the plot sizes and established building line remains the same.
  - 3.17 Recent development on the outskirts of the town in the form of a large retail area has reduced pedestrian and vehicular traffic through the town centre but the square remains busy due to easy access to a bank and several small shops.
  - 3.18 There are no specific entries on the Sites and Monuments Record for Tower Square Conservation Area.

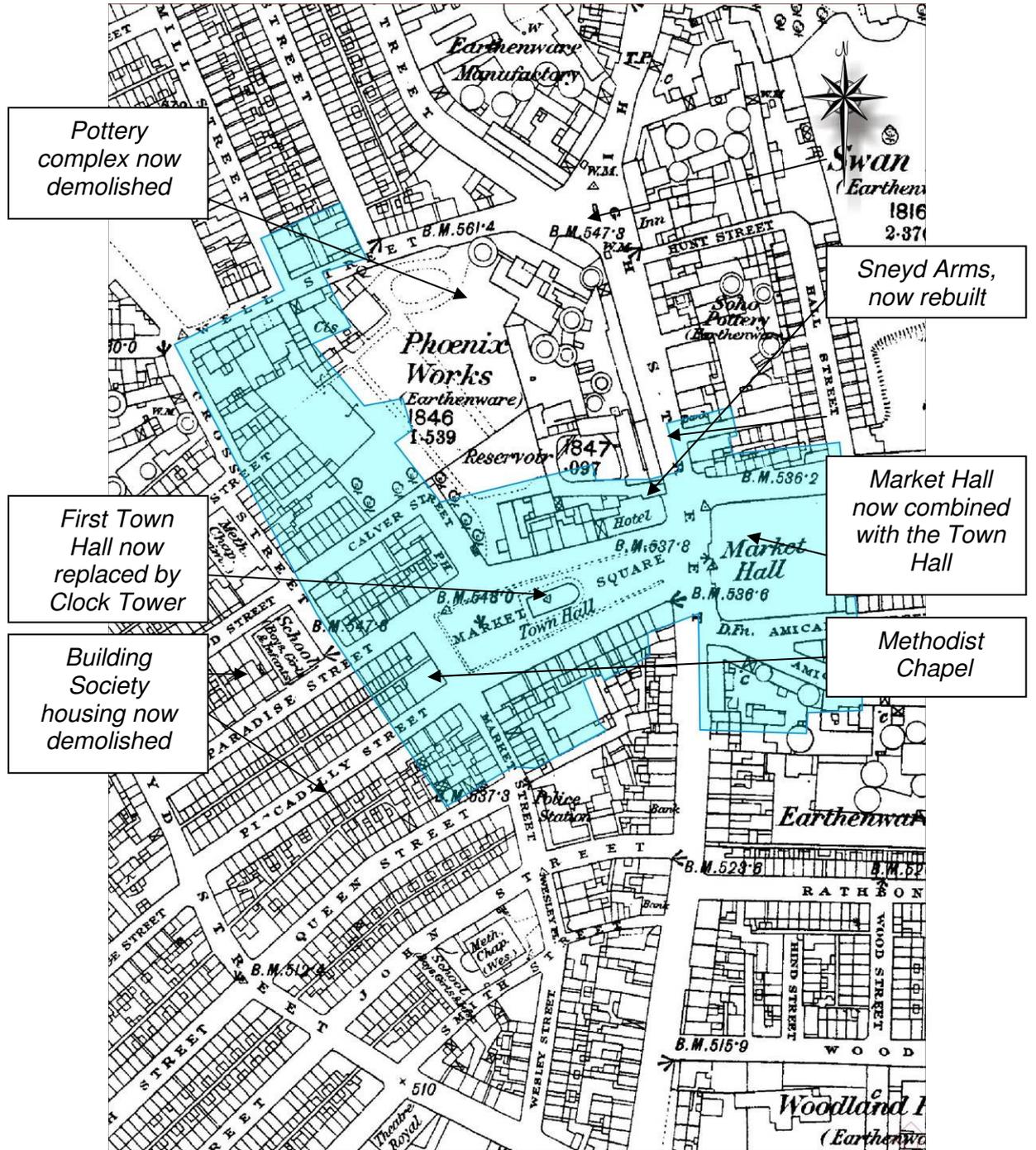


FIGURE 1: Tunstall Town Centre in 1879.

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## 4. Spatial Analysis and Appraisal of Views

### 4.1 Form

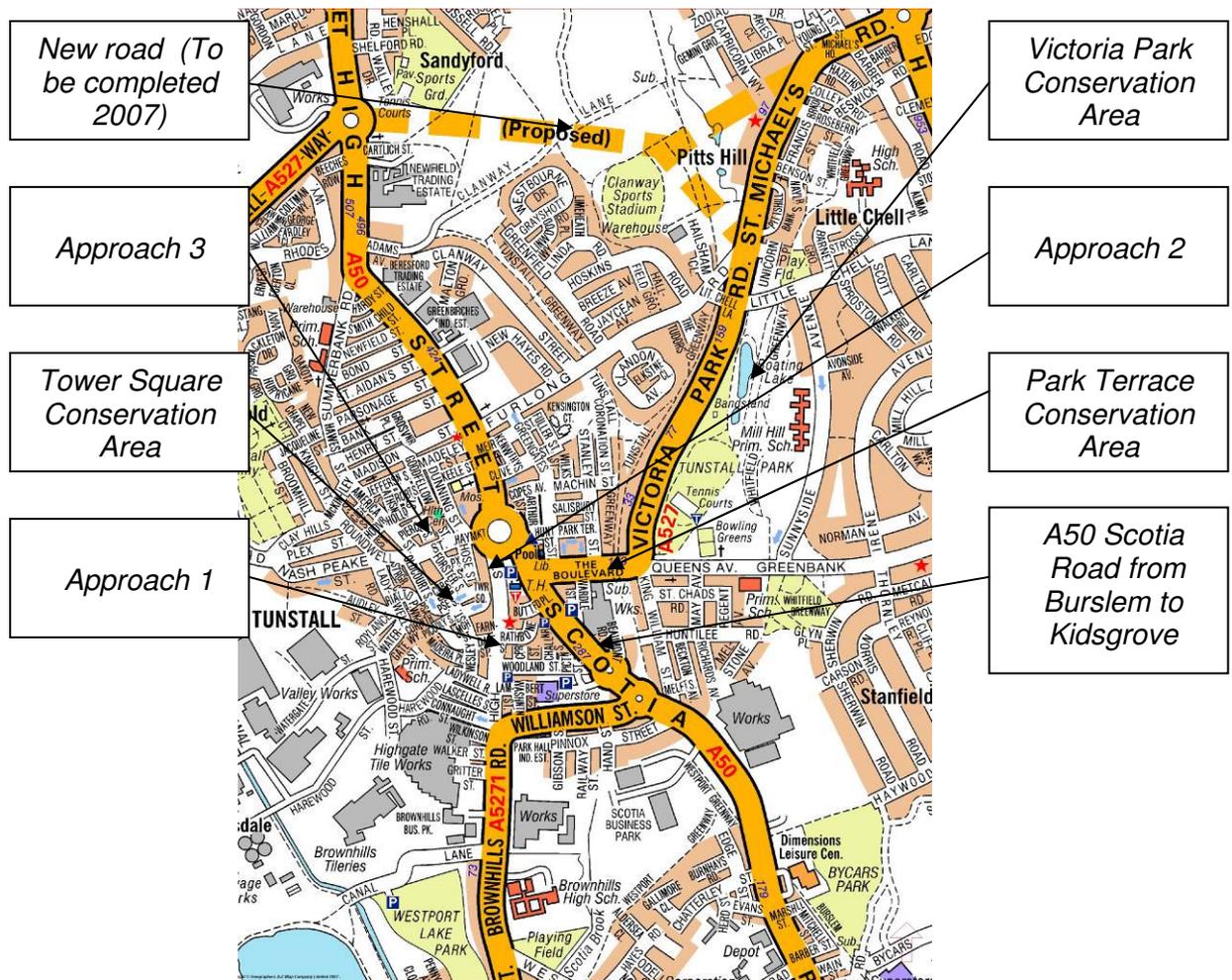
4.11 Tower Square forms the central focus point within the area with the High Street running parallel and through at the East end.



**FIGURE 2:** *Tower Square looking towards the High Street and Town Hall*

The Conservation Area is drawn together at this nodal point through the meeting of three distinct paths - the main traffic routes - here termed '*Approaches*'. Subsidiary routes, mostly residential cul-de-sacs off the main roads, are grouped within each Approach, while back alleys service the rear of properties in the South of the Area. The following definitions are used thus:

- **Approach 1:** High Street from Burslem
- **Approach 2:** High Street from Goldenhill (Busses and pedestrians only)
- **Approach 3:** Roundwell Street from the East
- **Core:** Tower Square.



**FIGURE 3: Conservation Area Approaches.**

## 4.2 Views

4.21 A number of significant internal views, alignments and relationships can be identified:

- Entering the Area along Approach 1 the Town Hall dominates the area and as you enter the Conservation Area the view opens up surprisingly to reveal the square.
- Walking down Forster Street towards Tower Square, the Clock Tower is at the centre of the unfolding view. Within the square, the ground slopes from North to South; the Clock Tower dominates, the top of its chamfered base coinciding with the eaves of the two storey shops on the background.
- The square also slopes from West to East. This enhances the status of the Clock Tower when viewed from the High Street. The opposing view towards the Town Hall shows only the large first floor windows, ornate moulded brickwork and “star of David” window. The ground floor has less impact as it is below eye level.

- The buildings on all sides of the Square are clearly shown in silhouette. There are no dominant buildings in the backdrop and therefore the ridge detailing, chimneys and pots are all important contributors to the character of the space.



**FIGURE 4:** *A view into the Area along Approach 1*



**FIGURE 5:** *The Square*

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4.22 Views of quality out of the Area are limited, the height of the Square compared to the immediate surroundings means that vistas to the West are shortened. Views to the East are spoilt by Scotia Road, dividing the Town Centre into two parts.

### **4.3 Open Spaces**

4.31 The square itself is the largest designed area of open space in the area. The square is partially one-way for traffic, and parking bays using a pay and display system surround the inside of the square.

4.32 There are trees flanking the open central space in front of the Clock Tower and some seating at the East end in front of the Town Hall. This arrangement leaves the central space open for market stalls – but initially seems unfriendly as visitors instinctively search for seating at the base of the tower for the best views.

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## **5. Built Form**

### **5.1 The Influence of Use Patterns and Patronage**

- 5.12 The centre of Tunstall was laid out as planned development after 1816. As the town was beginning to expand there became a need for a police station and lock-up. The first chief constable J.H Clive of Newfield Hall instigated the creation of Tower Square and the original Town Hall which also housed a police station, lock up/strong house, fire engine and market place which were built in the centre of the square in 1816. This was “to promote good order and tranquillity, and stop the increase in drunkenness and disorder”.
- 5.13 The land was purchased from the then Lord of the Manor, Walter Sneyd by means of public subscription. This was then the germ of the new town which subsequently sprung up around it.
- 5.14 Subsequent building in the square was controlled by the Tunstall Local Board of Health and always focussed on the provision of Market buildings. This emphasis on the market at the centre of the town heavily influenced the design and nature of the Town Halls; civic and commercial activities tightly bound together.
- 5.15 The tower itself is situated on the site of the original town hall and was erected in honour of Sir Smith Child, one of the town’s benefactors. This is also a public monument, provided by public subscription.
- 5.16 The first housing in the Conservation Area was built and laid out by the Tunstall Building Society. This also began in 1816, but in contrast to the Board of Health, had local tradesmen as members. The houses set the standard which was adopted for hundreds of similar properties in the adjacent streets.
- 5.17 The area immediately to the North of the site was dominated by a large pottery called the Phoenix Works. This is shown (albeit not fully developed) in 1832 and survived until c1880. The redevelopment of this site for housing allowed for a new road (Forster Street) to run North to South. The 1900 O.S. map also shows the school buildings and the factory at the corner of Roundwell Street and Cross Street.

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## **5.2 Architectural Character, Materials, Colours and Textures**

### **5.21 Style**

5.22 The Town Hall and shops are in the Neo-Renaissance style; ashlar faced with plain tiled roofs with ridge cresting. The main range is of 2 storeys and 5 bays, the central bay advanced. There is channelled ashlar to ground floor with shallow arches over shop fronts (some altered), and central doorway with paired console brackets carrying balcony over. The upper section divided by brick pilasters, the windows have stone moulded mullions and transoms with round-arched heads. Terracotta balustrading and frieze, stone pediments over outer bays, with heavy console brackets. In the entablature are inscribed: "Peace, Happiness, Truth, Justice AD MDCCCLXXXV". Over the central bay, a raised double pediment, the lower section raised on Mannerist urn-like pilasters, and cut by a higher segmental pediment. Recessed outer sections of 2 bays with paired lights in ashlar lower storey and oriel bay windows over with foliate swags and steep pediments with Mannerist decoration. The brick parapet carries an eaves cornice with stone dressings. Similar decorative detailing is carried round return to Butterfield Place. The Town Hall is flanked by bank buildings; to the North there is a single storey classical stone building, to the South, a bank and bank chambers impressively decorated in the Arts and Crafts style, with many moulded terracotta dressings, dated 1899 and 1898 respectively. The ground floor of the chambers unfortunately has been ruined by an "off the peg" granite shop-front to suit corporate identity.

5.23 The majority of buildings facing the square date between 1820-1830 and are built in a modest vernacular style as small shops with living accommodation above. The former chapel of Methodist New Connection, (dated plaque in pediment - 1821), has later modifications. It matches the majority of buildings, being in painted and rendered brick with plain tiled roof. The pedimented facade to Tower Square has later 1920's shop fronts to ground floor, with a continuous fascia carried on console brackets and windows with leaded upper lights and some decorative glazing. To the first floor there is a central Palladian window in stuccoed architrave above, flanked by 2 windows in shouldered architraves. Elevation to Piccadilly Street of 2 storeys, rising to 3 over sloping ground to West. All windows altered, though original flat-arched heads survive, and there is one early C19 doorcase with moulded architrave. There are also good original doorcases to houses in Piccadilly Street opposite. The Sneyd Arms, although on the site of the Georgian inn, has unfortunately been rebuilt - probably in the 1950's and has lost any period charm. Other public houses in the square are adaptations of the original houses and retain many period features, including strong dentil eaves cornices. 133 the High street is an impressive corner building with strong Dutch gables and terracotta dressings to the windows. It sits slightly incongruously between the Italian Town Hall and the modest vernacular of the 1820's shops. The Lloyds bank has a cleverly designed late '50's/early '60's frontage with a later 20<sup>th</sup> c. window. No. 5 is a late 19thc. building which retains original windows which are enhanced by decorated stone and stucco window surrounds.

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## **5.24 Plan, Form and Massing**

5.25 The majority of shops facing the square are modest two storey vernacular cottages of a surprisingly small scale. The floor to ceiling heights are very low indeed. These buildings are in sharp contrast to those along the High Street which are also of two or three stories high, but are built on a grand scale.

5.26 The plan form of the square is formal but the execution of the design was not controlled, so the buildings are ad – hoc, showing the evolution of the development. The shops in the square were not built to a comprehensive design, as were for example, the London squares on estate land. Although neighbouring properties within the terraces share some details, there is no sense of control and the imposition of repetitive features. Where the details are repeated they are precious, as these are what tie the elements together into a familial identity. These features include:

- The use of render and/or paint over brick to front elevations
- Decorative eaves brickwork, either in the form of saw-tooth or dentil brick cornice
- Decorative stucco frames to windows
- Classical timber door-cases

5.27 The focus of the square is the clock-tower; this was built in 1893 and paid for by public subscription in commemoration of the Smith-Child family.

5.28 Moving away from the square along Forster Street, the Eastern side is dominated by the Wolstanton School Board Building which is an impressive two storey, 15 bay building in local brick. The building is flanked by houses of the same period and in the same materials. The Western side of the road has no. 17, a shop in complimentary materials and similar age. This consistency of appearance occurs because the street was formed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Phoenix Pottery was redeveloped. The factory on the corner of Cross Street and Roundwell street is similar to the buildings in Forster street, reinforcing the group identity. It has an impressive five storey tower, the form of which suggests that it may have been originally built as a brewery. The tower and adjacent pottery chimney clearly mark the conservation area in long views.

## **5.29 External Walls and Façade Finishes**

### Brickwork

Brick facades within the square itself are mostly either rendered or painted on the façade. The backs of the buildings show that they are built in local dark red/purple bricks. Those that are built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with facing bricks, most notably the Town Hall and no. 5 & 6, use soft red facing brick imported from elsewhere. 20<sup>th</sup> c. brick facades within the square generally do not enhance the Conservation Area because they are not of good quality and do not add to the cohesiveness of the square.

79 Roundwell Street is an impressive house made from local brick, enhanced by the use of Staffordshire blues, plain and moulded in contrasting banding.

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The factory on the corner of Roundwell Street and Oldcourt Street and the school buildings in Forster Street are built in local brickwork to good effect.

Brick bond is generally Flemish, although there are also examples of modern stretcher bond.

### Stonework

The tower is raised on steps of *Red Hollington*, a soft-grained, pinkish-red sandstone laid in courses of squared blocks, and surrounded by cast-iron railings, the makers name cast into the base of each repeated section. The stone dressings to the Town Hall do not appear to be of local stone, and as the brickwork, this was probably imported to give special status to the building.

### Façade Treatments

Lined stucco is present on the earliest buildings in the Area though both brick and stonework was left unfinished through most phases of the Area's development. Where render, wet or dry dash has been employed on the few buildings altered or built during the late 1890s-1920s it covers portions of the façade, for example, the Chapel in the Square and in Butterfield Place.



**FIGURE 6:** *Façade finishes.*

### Terracotta

The clock tower is built in yellow terracotta in imitation of ashlar masonry. It has a square chamfered pier on a wider base with gabled pilaster buttresses. There is a small shouldered archway to doorway giving access to stair in one facade, the others having recessed arched panels bearing inscriptions of donors names, and facing the town hall, a bust set in a foiled niche with ornate hood mould over. The clock itself is set in a square stage with gabled cap surmounted by a small fleche. Elsewhere terracotta is used as moulded stone for window surrounds, cills, console brackets and window hoods. There are also encaustic tiles used as external decoration in Roundwell Street.

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### 5.30 Roofs

- Material

Virtually all roofs carry local dark blue-purple tiles. Decorative ridge tiles are an important feature of the Town Hall and are also found on the School gables in Forster Street. The re-built Sneyd Arms has pan-tiles and there are examples of poor replacement roofs, most notably in Roundwell Street.



**FIGURE 7:** *Elaborate roof including corner turret to High Street in contrast to modest undecorated roof in Tower Square*

- Pitch and Type

The Area contains a variety of roof types with simple, gently pitched roofs dominating through their use on terraced shops. Most variety and complexity is found amongst the larger shops in the High Street. The roof of 79 Roundwell is now exceptional in its extreme shallowness, whilst one of the most flamboyant must be no. 130 High Street, complete with corner turret.

### 5.31 Windows

- Type and Fenestration

Across the Area sash windows remain the most common window type providing a vertical emphasis to facades. A few broader casements do however occur as either components of original designs or as later alterations on a number of properties. Windows are single or paired; composite or tripartite arrangements separated by ornamental mullions or balusters in stone or wood. Arrangements vary, though repetition within terraces maintains a sense of regularity. It is common for windows to carry a heavy rectangular stone sill and lintel, often decorated to produce a visual contrast with the masonry.

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### 5.32 Porches

Projecting porches are not typical of the Area given constraints upon space. Projecting door hoods are common, either in painted timber as part of the door-case or as part of the masonry.

### 5.33 Doors

Few original or unaltered front doors survive though most terraces incorporating passages have retained the original plank doors which close them. Halls are normally lit by a transom light of which there are various surviving configurations.

### 5.34 Enclosure

With the exception of some properties in Roundwell Street, properties are built onto the back of the pavement and there is no enclosure of private space to the front. This is even true of the Town Hall which incorporated shops into the front façade. Where they do exist, walls are constructed from brick to match the host building. No original railings survive other than those at the Town Hall.

### 5.35 Shop Fronts

Simple and economical house-shop units comprising plain rectangular windows with door and fascia are predominant, the domestic scale and utilitarian appearance providing a village-like feel. The Paradise Inn has robust timber detailing and the pet shop at 17 Forster Street has charm, with a corner entrance flanked by two original shop windows with console brackets and fascia above. Modern fascias to shop-fronts in the square at nos. 7, 9-10, 17 and 25 are visually intrusive and could be improved. Generally the fascias to the South side are too large and are reaching the cills of the lower windows.



**FIGURE 8:** Shop in Forster Street with dual aspect window and corner entrance

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### 5.36 Ground-scape and Public Realm

- Original street, pavement and kerbing materials have been almost entirely replaced with tarmac or concrete slabs across the Area.
- The original back alley to Paradise and Piccadilly Streets still partially retains its sets.
- No original street furniture survives within the Area.
- The Area has a number of attractive street name signs fixed to the sides of buildings, for example at 79 Roundwell Street.
- There are three types of modern lamp standard within the Conservation Area and a surprising number of security cameras and two types of seating.



**FIGURE 9:** *Remains of historic street surfaces.*

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## 5.3 Listed and Unlisted Buildings of Importance

### 5.31 Buildings on the Statutory List

- Tunstall Market – grade II
- Former Town Hall and Shops – grade II
- Clock Tower and attached railings – grade II
- Former chapel of Methodist New Connections – grade II



**FIGURE 10:** *Former chapel of Methodist New Connections*

### 5.32 Buildings of Special Local Interest Listed in The Local Plan

- 79 Roundwell Street
- 122-130 High Street
- 42 & 44 Paradise Street



**FIGURE 11:** 79 Roundwell Street.

### 5.33 Unlisted Buildings of Note

Most buildings within the Area pre-dating 1930 make a positive contribution to the character of the Area, though alterations have reduced this in a number of cases. The following selection of notable unlisted buildings is by no means comprehensive:

- *160 High Street:* One storey stone building currently used as a bank with large dual aspect windows with large closed pediment supported on pilasters above. Over the corner entrance door is a small closed pediment with a large open segmental pediment above.
- *Wolstanton School Board Building (Surestart), Forster Street.* Dating from 1880 this former school is a 15 bay brick building with decorative diaper work and frieze panels below the upper floor large windows.



**FIGURE 12:** *Wolstanton School Board Building*

- *No. 17 Phoenix Street* is a shop with original Victorian timber shopfront and sash windows and a corner shop entrance door.
- *Oldcourt Pottery, Roundwell Street.* A four storey Victorian former pottery building which was possibly originally built as a brewery and is clearly visible and identifiable standing on one of the highest areas of Tunstall.



**FIGURE 13:** *Oldcourt Pottery, Roundwell Street.*

## **5.4 Trees, Green Spaces, Edges and Ecology**

5.41 Due to the commercial nature of the area there are little or no gardens within the Conservation Area and consequentially almost no green space. Any gardens such as those to the rear of the properties at Paradise Street and Piccadilly Street take the form of small walled backyards.

5.42 Tower Square itself has some dozen or so semi-mature trees in planters and there are also trees in Butterfield Place and The Boulevard.

## **5.5 Detractors, Neutral Areas and Gap Sites – Enhancement and Development Opportunities**

- 5.51 Features which detract from the character and appearance of the Area include:
- Heavy traffic using the High Street and along the A50 Scotia Road to the East of the Conservation Area. Both these routes create noise and pollution while disrupting connectivity.
  - Parking is at a premium within the Conservation Area with a pay and display car park around the tower in the square.
  - Replacement windows and doors, particularly those made of PVCu. These are often of varied design within the square and surrounding environs,

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spoiling their harmony, while plastic windows are intrinsically harmful to the appearance and fabric of historic buildings.

- Inappropriate signage and advertising to the commercial premises.
- A number of relatively modern buildings of inharmonious design and/or positioning in several parts of the Conservation Area. In each case these spoil the setting of adjacent historic properties.
- There is an incontinuity in the shopfronts on and leading off from Tower Square.
- Some of the shopfronts are poorly designed, especially the stallrisers which often do not match the general design of the façade.



**FIGURE 14:** *Poorly designed stallrisers, signage and inconsistent shopfronts.*

- The Western edge of the area borders a large and distinctive 1970's housing estate built on the site of demolished terrace houses. The remaining houses within the Conservation Area look truncated and no attempt has been made to fit the old with the new.
- There is a large car parking area in Oldcourt Street to the rear of the Surestart building with high metal fencing which creates a cramped and cluttered neutral area on the edge of the Conservation Area.
- There are in storage the workings from the Tower Square clock tower which are over 100 years old. A scheme to display this historic part of the Conservation Area is hoped to be developed in the future.

5.52 Currently there are no gap sites within the area.

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## **6. Pressures and Threats**

- 6.1 Due to the recent cultivation of a retail centre to the South-East of the town centre trade has dropped in the town centre leading to an increased number of vacant properties and a downturn in the quality of retailers to attract the general public.
- 6.2 The new retail area is due to be extended in the near future (permission was granted in May 2006) and as part of this new development the new Surestart building is to be built which may then render the existing former Wolstanton School Board building currently housing the local Surestart centre redundant.
- 6.3 The Former Town Hall is an important and prominent listed building on the square and is currently only half used making it vulnerable to damage.
- 6.4 As mentioned previously the overuse of signage and inconsistency of the shopfronts creates a cluttered and busy visual aspect to Tower Square and Paradise Street.
- 6.5 There is pressure on street parking with controlled spaces operated within Tower Square and double yellow lines reducing the availability of parking and therefore the making it increasingly harder to visit the town centre.

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## **7. Summary of Special Interest**

### Architecture

Tower square still retains some original features and plan form from the original plan of 1816.

### History

Although being one of the youngest towns in the pottery the area can be traced back to the 1200's and the square has played an important role in that history.

### Character and Appearance

The Area has a market town feel which is unique within the city. This is created by the square and the open views from the square.

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## 8. Recommendations and Proposals

- 8.1 Boundaries A minor revision has been carried out to include several buildings which merit inclusion into the Conservation Area and complete the scene of the area.

Proposed for inclusion:

- Roundwell Street 61 – 63a Roundwell Street is a large Georgian house that adjoins 79 Roundwell Street (which is currently within Conservation Area). It is now split into three properties but retains its Georgian symmetry and the pedimented door with moulded brackets.
- Forster Street 40 Forster Street / 45 Roundwell Street is an Arts and Crafts red brick building built between 1880 and 1924. It was stone quoins with a fine stone ornamented doorcase and a mid level brick moulded band.
- Phoenix Street No. 17 Phoenix street is a shop with original Victorian timber shopfront and sash windows and a corner shop entrance door. It has a brick dentil cornice detail at eaves level and a horizontal of diaper band at mid level.

Boundaries in each case are suggested by natural breaks in townscape character or historical developmental patterns and relationships. These appear clearer cut within Approaches 1 and 2 than Approach 3, where development was more erratic and much redevelopment has taken place.

- 8.2 Due to the commercial and retail nature of the area an Article 4(2) Direction was deemed unnecessary as permitted development rights are curtailed for commercial properties.
- 8.3 Tower Square is particularly susceptible to damage by inappropriate shopfront design and signage leading to a highly busy street scene at ground floor level.

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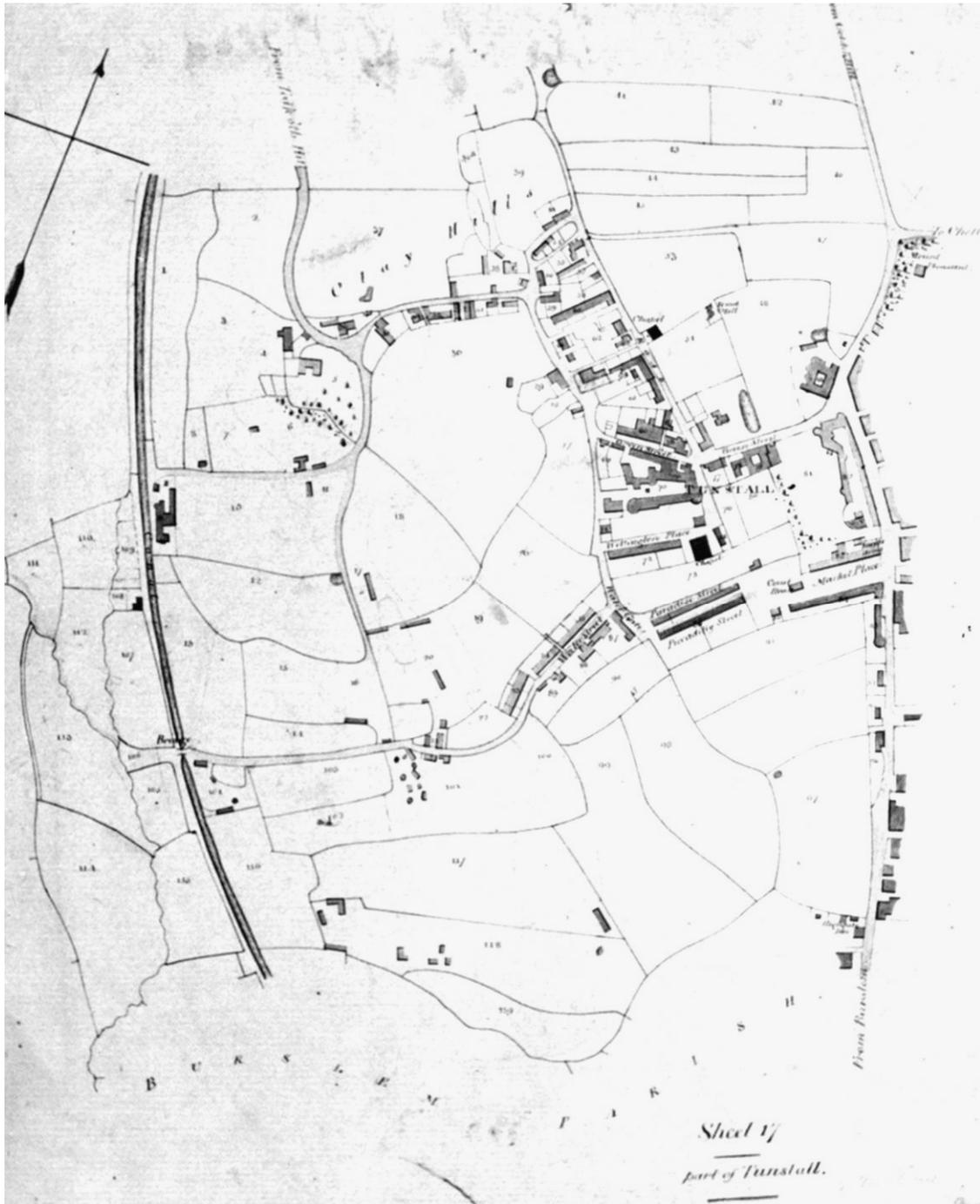
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## Appendices



Yates map of 1775 from *Staffordshire Archaeological Studies – Museum Archaeological Society Report, New Series No.4 1987*



Map of Tunstall in 1820 from *Staffordshire Archaeological Studies – Museum Archaeological Society Report, New Series No.4 1987*