



FOXT

Conservation Area Character Appraisal

April 2018



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Plate 4 – Extract from the Tithe map of 1843 (D4044/1 - Staffordshire Record Office)

INTRODUCTION

This appraisal document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of Foxt & also identifies opportunities for enhancement. It follows the model set out in Historic England's guidance: 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' - Historic England Advice Note 1 (pub. 25 Feb 2016).

Every local planning authority has a duty to assess from time to time if any of their areas (which are not conservation areas) contain special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). They shall then, following a review and, depending upon the results, designate those areas as conservation areas. This appraisal of FOXT has followed this legal process and duty.

Conservation area designation leads to an obligation that special attention should be paid to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

The contents of this Conservation Area Appraisal are intended to be both a guide for owners and occupiers of buildings and land within the conservation area and a guide for the local planning authority. The contents are a material consideration when determining applications for development, dealing with appeals, or proposing works for the preservation or enhancement of the area.

Consultation

Both Historic England and Government guidance recommends the involvement of residents and businesses within conservation areas.

This appraisal has been widely circulated and advertised with full public consultation, as set out in the Council's 'Statement of Community Involvement'. A copy of the draft appraisal was placed on the Council website and at the Council offices in Leek. All comments have been considered in drawing up the final version of the Appraisal.

The designation of a conservation area at Foxt is part of the Churnet Valley Masterplan. Foxt overlooks the Churnet Valley.

I. CONTEXT

Location

1.1 The original hamlet of Foxt sits on a significant spur of Chatsworth Grit sandstone, at 250-260 metres AOD, approximately 1 kilometre from the River Churnet, which flows to its south-west. The settled part of the later 18th century village is strung out along the route of an ancient packhorse road known as The Casey, but this appraisal is concerned with the focus of the original settlement at the southern tip of the village. The strategic position of Foxt can best be appreciated during the winter months from: the A52 descending Kingsleybanks, where there is a long view across the Churnet Valley; and from the B5053, where filtered views over the trees canopy across Massey's Wood and Moseymoor Wood permit views of houses perched along the ridge.

1.2 The presence of the River Churnet appears to have had no specific influence on the presence of the hamlet and there is little sign that the industrial development of the Churnet Valley had any effect on its character and early form. Areas of development related to the 18th and 19th century industrial development of the Churnet Valley have been excluded from this appraisal, following a boundary review, as they are significantly detached from the core of Foxt. This is assessed in section 4.

1.3 A number of landscape character types are found within the Churnet Valley Area. The hamlet of Foxt falls within several Landscape Character types, comprising:

- Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys
- Dissected sandstone highland fringe

Summary of Special Interest and Key Characteristics

1.4 Foxt is primarily a historic landscape with historic buildings meshed within the ancient, part man-made, part natural, landscape.

1.5 Geographical factors of isolation, geology and landform have exerted an influence on the lack of development over successive generations, leading to a well-preserved settlement.

1.6 The bare bones of the ancient hamlet are readily understandable; although the earliest buildings date from the 17th century, or thereabouts, they sit within a much older framework of crofts and passageways, chiselled in part out of the bedrock and lined by walls of massive stones formed through field clearance. The kind of features we see are reminiscent of the 'orthostat' walls of Roystone Grange Romano-British site in Derbyshire and Castalack in Cornwall, which dates from the Iron Age.

1.7 The key characteristics of the conservation area include the following:

- a scenic, dramatic, wooded presence, with stands of trees (native deciduous and tall Scots pine), clinging to the steep slopes and dominating the Shirley Brook valley
- an extensive network of public footpaths, narrow lanes and former packhorse routes, interlocking and providing a highly permeable public environment
- very well-preserved physical evidence of ancient man-made settlement, with a timeless and organic, fluid character
- rare, early drystone boundary walls made up of massive stones laid both on end and on bed

- small clusters of farmstead groups of irregular courtyard plan
- Important early 17th century farmhouses, built from dark pink gritstone

Designations

1.8 Conservation Areas are protected under the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. This primary legislation requires proposals that need planning permission to preserve or enhance special architectural or historic interest.

1.9 The boundary of the conservation area is illustrated on Figure 1. There are three listed buildings within the conservation area boundary, Gate Farm, with curtilage garage also marked, Bolton Farm and the Barn 20 metres north-west of Gate Farm. However, there are many more vernacular buildings of historic and architectural interest.

1.10 There are four individual trees inside the hamlet protected by Tree Preservation Orders. A long strip of land to the south of the hamlet, following the route of the Shirley Brook and at Harston Wood falls within an Site of Special Scientific Interest - The Churnet Valley SSSI. The Churnet Valley SSSI includes the steep-sided main valley of the River Churnet and a number of tributary valleys. These valleys retain the largest remaining concentration of semi-natural ancient woodland in Staffordshire, intermixed with scrub, unimproved neutral and acid grassland and large areas of mire, marsh and carr. Coarse-grained gritstones of the Chatsworth Grit type outcrop along the top of Harston Wood. Past land use patterns and the complex geology have resulted in an intricate soil pattern which is reflected in the vegetation. Dry grasslands occur in the valley of Shirley Brook, but with the notable addition of common milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*, another county rarity.

Planning Policy Context

1.11 National planning policy for the historic environment is all contained within one overarching document, the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). This embodies a holistic view of the historic environment and is designed to ensure that decisions are not made in isolation without first considering the significance of the particular aspects of the historic environment and then addressing economic, social and environmental sustainability issues.

1.12 The main local policies covering conservation areas are found within the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy (2014). The local planning policy context includes Policy DC2 on The Historic Environment, Policy DC3 on Landscape and Settlement, Policy DC1 Design Considerations and Policy C3 Green Infrastructure.

1.13 Core Strategy, Policy SS7, identifies the Churnet Valley as a sustainable tourism area and Policies R1 and R2 now form part of the adopted development plan and are consistent with the aims of the Framework, which seeks to support a prosperous rural economy.

1.14 The Churnet Valley Master Plan (2014) is also part of the Core Strategy and the published guidance is Supplementary Planning Guidance. This will influence planning decisions and other initiatives and strategies affecting this area. The overarching principle is one of sustaining and enhancing the natural, built and historic environmental quality of the area, its settlements and its hinterland through managed change which provides for rural regeneration largely based on sustainable tourism. The Plan identified the review of a potential Conservation Area at Foxt as a key action.

2. LOCATION, SETTING AND GEOLOGY

2.1 Foxt sits on a band of Chatsworth Grit sandstone, which outcrops in a prominent formation over the Shirley Brook valley, creating a highly distinctive feature of the landscape, although now largely obscured by pine woods. Out of this stone and gathered from field clearance are hewn large boulders forming the characteristic enclosed walls and buildings of the historic settlement.

2.2 To the west of this band of Chatsworth Grit is a band of Rough Rock sandstone and, further west still, the Lower Coal Measures mudstones, siltstones and sandstones, which were mined for coal deposits and ironstone on either side of Blackbank Brook.



Above - standing outcrop of Chatsworth Grit at Oldridge to the south of Foxt. This formation is typical of the bluff below Foxt, now hidden by trees.

Left - view along the narrow circuit path to the south of the crofts, with Chatsworth Grit bluffs and tenacious woodland

2.3 The River Churnet and its tributaries contain deeply incised wooded valleys associated with Carboniferous and Permo-Triassic sandstones. The valleys are strongly undulated with a pronounced rounded landform above the valley sides and there are rock outcrops to valley tops. The rocky outcrop on which Foxt was first built is now largely smothered in trees and vegetation, although its striking natural rocky form may have been a major landmark for many centuries. The acid soils, brown earths and stagnogley soils originally supported vegetation communities between lowland and upland heath. These now support extensive woodland areas.

2.4 One of the particular characteristics of the Churnet Valley, and Foxt, is the series of "cloughs" which run from the moor down to the River Churnet. There are three distinctive cloughs which lie to the east and west of Foxt; the smallest of these, Hoff Clough (through which runs a small stream, fed by an old well and spring line), lies to the immediate east and south of the old village. Slightly further to the east runs the large clough which is formed by the Shirley Brook and to the west runs the clough created from Blackbank Brook.

2.5 The name 'hoff' also applies to the large area of land surrounding the old village enclosures, and could be derived from a number of Old English words; 'hoh' meaning heel, spur of land or

projecting ridge of land (Anglo Saxon), or 'haugr' meaning mound or hill (Old Norse). The name is distinctive and may have once applied to all of the land forming the projecting spur, as shown on the Tithe map which is overlaid with the names of the fields (Plate 4). The fields to the immediate north and east of the settlement were all once called Big and Little Hoff. The derivation is certainly ancient and may point to the early origins of the village.

2.6 All conservation areas have a setting, but few places in the Staffordshire Moorlands have as dramatic and dynamic a setting as Foxt; this will be best known to those intimately acquainted with the myriad of footpaths to the south and east of the settlement. From the south, the spur of gritstone clad in Scots pine towers above the valley of the Shirley Brook and the land drops sharply to the south.



View of Foxt from Oldridge. The large green upland pasture, visible above the treeline within the Shirley Brook valley, was cleared as part of the establishment of the original settlement

2.7 It seems probable, given the location, the steep terrain of the crofts, and the tremendous difficulties in clearing the rocky ground for pasture, that the hamlet must have had some defensive purpose, even if this was only subliminal in the minds and choices of the early settlers. The enclosures supported a form of early pastoral farming. The presence of the hamlet on the spur and the bluff beneath are visible from a considerable distance and are set apart

from the presence of industry within the Churnet Valley. This was the case even when industries, plateways and tramways crept up the valleys. The rural isolation and strategic position are particularly important to the historic significance of the settlement and its dramatic hilltop setting.

2.8 The sustainable location of the hamlet, the 'Old Town,' was made possible by tapping into a water supply from the hills and streams to the north. For centuries it was served by an ancient watercourse, 'Spout Gutter', traces of which can still be seen running parallel with 'The Casey'. The presence of a water pump at Manor House is related to an underground cistern, which may have been dug into the rock, a means of storing rainwater, perhaps for soft water, or for times of dwindling supply. There is also a natural spring on the edge of the village, known as Oldstone Well (see figure 2), which was reached via the main footpath and a flight of stone steps from the village (see page 17) and prior to the construction of the 'Spout Gutter' it seems likely that the villagers used this spring-fed supply. The wide road of 'The Casey' (itself possibly part of a planned medieval expansion of the settlement), leading from the Fox and Goose pub northwards, contrasts with the huddle of buildings in the core of the original hamlet.

2.9 There were once extensive woodland blocks and belts of deciduous and conifer trees along the valley sides of Blackbank Brook and Shirley Brook, although this appears to have been regularly replenished over the generations. Areas of woodland were cleared by assarting in order to enable cultivation and pasture and the resulting field pattern to the south of the village is of small and irregular enclosures. To the north there is Ancient Woodland at Blackbank Wood, which is part of Ipstones Park.



View of Foxt from Kingsley Banks. The hamlet is prominent from this direction, dominated by Scots pine, and its relationship to the Churnet Valley in the foreground is clear.



View of Foxt from the B5053 at Ipstones. The settlement is clear trailing along the ridge, above the line of woodland in Moseymoore Wood. Its rural setting is an important part of its significance



View of Foxt from the lane passing between Whiston Common and Shirley Common - the strategic importance of the settlement is much clearer from the east, although buildings are shrouded in trees. The Big Hoff is prominent and an essential ingredient of the hamlet

2.10 Tall hedgerows and hedgebanks line the sunken lanes on the winding network when approaching from Froghall, limiting views and creating a strong sense of enclosure and antiquity. In places the small, intimate wooded valleys contrast with the glimpses of wider distant views towards Ipstones Edge.

2.11 The land between Whiston Common and Shirley Common provides long distance views across to Foxt, which is a prominent landmark. The buildings are largely cloaked in the canopy of pine trees but there are occasional glimpses of a rooftop and chimneys. There are important views from Oldridge, on the south side of the Shirley Brook, along the route of the public footpath between 220 and 235 metres AOD.

3. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The place-name Foxt is old English (OE *Fox, wist*) but it was not recorded at Domesday (1086). The physical evidence for the early establishment of the settlement, however, is compelling and Iron Age farmers may have settled the spur which overlooks the Churnet Valley. Its strategic importance is best appreciated from the Kingsley road (A52) at around 200 metres AOD, where there is a direct line of sight to the knoll of the old 'town' of Foxt, a hamlet with as many as seven enclosures, and 17th century farmsteads, possibly the site of many more earlier houses. The first mention of the place, then known as 'Foxwiss' (the lair of the fox), is in 1176¹. Even today foxes dens survive in the banks and tree-covered escarpments along the Shirley Brook.

3.2 Without documentary evidence for settlement, there is no means of attributing a positive date without archaeological excavation. Many of the assumptions postulated here are based on circumstances, including geographical factors. We can compare the settlement with others within the region, and further afield, and make informed observations by comparing characteristics but other regions are much better understood, so whether Foxt started off as an Iron Age group of farms, a Romano-British settlement², or a medieval settlement is not known – we do know that it exhibits characteristics of the earliest settlements, located at the tip of a promontary, which could be defended, and it is significantly different from the nucleated settlements of the Midlands, where houses front a street with rear crofts aligned along a street. Upland hilltop settlements of North Wales containing similar pear-shaped enclosures, defended by stone walls and thought to be associated with the smelting and forging of iron in the first century BC, provide a tantalizing glimpse of potential origins. It has been suggested that in the later 7th century there is evidence for Celtic culture on the edge of the Peak, at Rudyard on the flank of the Gun ridge³. It is also equally possible that occupation was intermittent and that the earlier settlement was re-colonised in the medieval period, re-using stones from earlier structures – certainly the standing physical evidence of buildings is limited to 17th century structures.

3.3 In the early 12th century the Norman family of Verdon were in possession of Alton and were granted the manor of Ipstones and in 1292 their sub-tenant, William de Ipstones, held the manors of Ipstones and Foxwyst, by agreement with Theobald de Verdon. Robert de Foxwyst appears in the Subsidy Roll of 1327 and again 1333. Whilst the manor of Ipstones consisted of the townships of Ipstones and Foxt, the ecclesiastical parish of Foxt was split between part of Ipstones (which lay within Leek parish) and Checkley, of which it was a detached part. Foxt was associated with the ecclesiastical parish of Checkley around the late 16th century, and it was known as the Liberty of Foxt in 1563⁴. This odd arrangement continued until 1897 when it became a parish in its own right – Foxt with Whiston. In practical terms, the alignment of the parishes was until 1897 formed by the route of a man-made watercourse know as 'Spout Gutter' roughly following the line of The Casey, and was recorded in 1781. However, precisely how far west into Ipstones the township extended is unknown, as there is no map recording this.



Pl. 1 1775 map of Foxt from William Yates map (Staffordshire Record Society)

1 Oxford Dictionary of English Placenames, p177

2 Roystone Grange (Peak District)– with its orthostat walls and pear-shaped enclosures has local regional relevance

3 Andrew Breeze – Staffordshire Archaeological & Historical Society Transactions- 'Britons at Rudyard', 2010

4 A 'liberty' applied to places with special rights or privileges

3.4 Richard Egerton inherited the Manor of Ipstones in 1627 but in 1633 sold his reversion, to pay for debts, to Matthew Craddock who then died in 1636. His son George Craddock conveyed the Manor of Ipstones in 1639 to William Fowler and John Hollins of Moseley as Trustees for sale and payment of certain debts. In 1649 William Fowler the surviving Trustee agreed with the ancient tenants and farmers of Ipstones to purchase the Manor and estates of Ipstones. Thus it was that the Manor came into the hands of the Freeholders of Ipstones.⁵



Plate 2 - Ordnance Survey map of 1881 (above)
 Plate 3 - Tithe map extract (left) dated 1843
 (Staffordshire Record Office)



Plate 4 - Foxt Tithe map of 1843 - coloured for this appraisal, to show the pattern of different ownerships and tenancies, with field names added (D4044/1 - Staffordshire Record Office)

⁵ Copy of the original deed of Ipstones from William Fowler and others SA12/1/3 [Sneyd Ashcombe collection, Keele]

3.5 By the date of the Tithe map and Award (1843), the freeholders owning property in the village were Joseph Ball, occupying the site of the present Manor House, William Ball and Charles Ball (the present Yew Tree Cottage), John Wheeldon - Gate Farm, Thomas Brandon - Brandon House Farm, Thomas Mackenzie - Bolton Farm, and Thomas Sillito - Rock House Farm. Thomas Heath, William Ball and William Fallowes were freeholders without a house in the hamlet. The Snow family were freeholders at Park Head with land in the Ipstones part of the former manor lands. The earliest standing buildings date from the early 17th century but within the original hamlet new development has been restricted to the reconstruction of the ancient houses and farmsteads (mainly during the 18th and early 19th century), the development within the vicinity of the Fox and Goose pub and some post WWII housing within the northern croft (excluded from the conservation area).

3.6 A detailed analysis of the Tithe map and Award reveals how the land was parcelled up after enclosure (perhaps as late as 1649 when the manor lands were sold to the ancient tenants) so that the main freeholders owned large amalgamated blocks. The former town field lay to the immediate north-east of the old part of the village, divided into linear 'strip' amalgamation. However, the earliest form of community farming may have taken place on the raised land on the eastern slopes of the village, above the Hoff Clough. Here the fields all share the same derivative name – Big Hoff, and they are separated by the massive 'orthostat,' unmortared, stone walls. These suggest early origins, even potentially preserved remains from prehistoric field systems.

3.7 The main landowners retained their interests in the parts of the woods running to the west of the settlement, through Blackbank, and these were generally not sub-let, timber being a profitable long-term investment; these areas were also the focus for mining interests. The land in the valley bottom is quite wet and boggy and may have been used occasionally as hay meadow.

Settlement Plan Form

3.8 The core of Foxt, which was known as the 'Old Town,' contains highly distinctive, irregular, teardrop or leaf-shaped enclosures or crofts. Most of these crofts contained a 'toft' with a farmhouse and farmstead concentrated in one corner of each croft, but forming a variety of irregular, loose courtyard plans. All but one of these survives in more-or-less its original form with clusters of buildings dating from or originating in the 17th century (Roycroft, which has been developed, is excluded from the conservation area), and there has been no modern development within the enclosures to disturb the well-preserved pattern.

3.9 There is the potential that the lack of development within the settlement has preserved a much earlier field system. Elsewhere within the high points of the Churnet Valley there have been discoveries of prehistoric rock carvings, with cup and ring marks and it is feasible that this place holds similar evidence, as yet undiscovered.

3.10 Deeds for Gate Farmhouse of 1628 describe the variety of functions which took place within the enclosure and beyond in their part of the redistributed former open field and woods:

"the dwelling house, the barn in the fold, the garden at the lower end of the house, the lower hempyard, the orchard, the croft beneath the orchard, the Stockings, the Pringle, the Weyte lands, the Doacle Ridding, the Green Hills ...". Riddings is located to the south of the town field and comes from the word Ryddynges meaning a clearing in a wood.



Massive boulder or 'orthostat' walls opposite Gate Farm

3.11 The crofts are bounded by drystone walls, some with massive blocks of stone at the base - large 'orthostat' stones are a distinctive characteristics of some upland areas in the Peak District of early A.D. origin, and these are separated by narrow sunken lanes and passageways. This web of relationships made a highly interactive form of community living and small-scale farming, which may predate the 'nucleated' settlements of the medieval period. Some of the original passages have been recently 'stopped up', and this is a pattern which can be seen from the late C19 but the majority remain and are a rare and very important survival of the original settlement pattern, where farmers drove their cattle and sheep between the houses to areas of communal grazing.

3.12 A cluster of small buildings strung out opposite the Fox and Goose is of the scale and pattern which is indicative of C18 encroachment onto former common land, perhaps the site of a village green, as this was placed close to the medieval village pond, the site of which is visible on the 1881 OS map and which is now occupied by a bungalow - Stonewalls - (outside the conservation area).

3.13 The later medieval development of the village appears to have continued along the route of 'The Casey', a main roadway following a packhorse route which was laid out with a generous width. Whilst houses are scattered in sporadic clusters along its length, at Town Head, Whirleylow, and at Park Head, there is no evidence of a croft and toft pattern of development along The Casey, and this may have been planned but never needed.

3.14 Not enough is known about the structure of Anglo-Saxon society and its farming practices to identify when the open-field system was introduced. The open fields of Foxt were certainly established in the medieval period to the north-east of the original village but before that it may have been a small amount of arable land, in common with known Anglo Saxon examples in better-researched parts of the country⁶. Were the free-draining fields which had been extensively cleared to the south-east of the escarpment communally farmed as common pasture? The links between this area and the crofts were important as they were connected by a circuitous path and interlinked paths from the farmsteads. The walled enclosures suggest the need to drive livestock through the settlement to areas of grazing. Without evidence for the distinctive ridge and furrow, perhaps this area was communally grazed, an area that was overlooked and could be protected.



Left - green turfed paths between crofts adjoining Gate Farm, an ancient 'cow lane'

Right - holloway leading from the Shirley Brook to the settlement, a deep depression linked to the circuit path

Archaeological Potential

3.15 Much could be done to discover more about the origins of the settlement and its occupants. The foci of this search would be the farmsteads within the small irregular enclosures and the outlying fields which encircle these homesteads.

⁶ The Making of the English Landscape – W.G.Hoskins



Above left - section of early, massive, boulder wall to the Rock House Farm croft. Above right - tall, dark red drystone wall to Brandon House Farm croft

Left - large boulders buried in the bottom of the wall at Brandon House Farm croft

3.16 There is sporadic evidence for human activity during the prehistoric period from around Foxt. The earliest evidence, of flint scatter, may be of Mesolithic date. A possible Neolithic standing stone, incised with four cup-marks and another, possibly contemporary, stone incised with a cup and ring mark were found at Ramshorn (4 miles south-east of Foxt). Evidence for Bronze Age activity tends to concentrate within the Moorlands in the form of burial mounds. Many of the numerous barrows known to exist (or that once existed) in the landscape of the Staffordshire Moorlands were first recorded, and some excavated, in the mid 19th century by Thomas Bateman and Samuel Carrington. These include five barrows they excavated at Threelows in Farley parish. The presence of the name 'low' (OE *hlaw*), a 'mound, hill' is found in many places in the Peak District and locally, such as Whirleylow along 'The Casey', Cadlow on the northern boundary of Foxt, Pike Low and Three Lows – whilst many may simply refer to the presence of a hill, some are indicative of the presence of a burial mound (a barrow) which also indicates early occupation or intermittent settlement by Iron Age farmers⁷. However, Old English place name evidence can refer directly to geographical features connected with the landform and is not reliable for identifying settlement.

3.17 There is, however, given the promontary position of the southern tip of the hamlet overlooking the Churnet Valley, archaeological potential that the hamlet of Foxt was indeed built within an earlier prehistoric or Iron Age field system, and if so it would be a rare survival. For this reason, any future development within the conservation area should be accompanied by a detailed archaeological evaluation.

⁷ According to P. Stimpson, a 'low' (burial mound) within the northern croft at Rock House Farm was removed some years ago and the ground was levelled (pers. comm. March 2018).

4. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

4.1 The description of each area should be read in conjunction with the Spatial Analysis Map - Figure 2.

Guide to Map

The Spatial Analysis Map is annotated with the following:

Panoramic Views

4.2 Panoramic views are limited to the best defining and most memorable views within and around Foxt. They are generally broad and often panoramas, sometimes linking subjects in the middle distance and far horizon. Some of the best panoramic views are from private properties, particularly Bolton Farmhouse and Manor House, and in the case of Manor House this is part of its significance and status. Views are also assessed under 'Setting'.

Positive Buildings

4.3 Positive buildings are those that are of special architectural or historic interest, either as individual structures or as part of a collective group. These include buildings that may be in a poor condition but which contribute to the historic or architectural character of the settlement, including re-used or redundant farm buildings. Many buildings which are identified as positive may have early origins which are as yet not known or understood, (such as Brandon House Farm) and where an evaluation will be required prior to considering an application for demolition or alteration. Positive buildings also include those identified on the detailed 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey map of 1881 (see plate 2). The local authority is likely to strongly resist proposals for the demolition of any Positive Buildings.

IOS - Important Open Space (private)

4.4 The nodes of teardrop-shaped enclosures contain paddocks and crofts which have shaped the form of the hamlet for generations. These private open spaces contrast with the clusters of development in corners of each historic enclosure. They are an intrinsic characteristic of the settlement, leading to glimpsed views and a strong sense of the antiquity of the settlement. They include a small parcel of land sitting on a lower plateau, which has been known as Fernlea Farm in recent times and was once known as Babin's Croft, although it does not contain any historic buildings.

There are aspects of spatial analysis which are not shown on the maps, as follows:

Public Open Space

4.5 Between Rock House Farm and Brandon House Farm the public domain is wide with a narrow roadway and generous green verges. The same generous green space and verges line the lane leading to Gate Farm. The old drovers lanes, or 'cow lanes' (some now pathways) leading between the crofts are softened by gentle contours and turfed ground, much of the undulations worn away by generations of wear and weather. This organic, almost fluid, semi-rural character of the lanes and undulating walls, with occasional turf capping, is specific to Foxt. Leading into the hamlet from Four Lane Ends the roads diverge and open out, on either side of Hockley House.

Glimpse Views

4.6 Glimpses between buildings and walls, through the hamlet, over walls and across the crofts are a particular characteristic of Foxt. The lanes around Brandon House Farm croft are much lower; a combination of years of farming the land and erosion of the lane have led to this pattern.

The glimpsed views are so numerous that they have not been plotted. Care should be taken to consider the impact on the glimpsed views in undertaking any development.

4.7 The spaces around buildings are particularly important in Foxt. The main road through Foxt is split into two sides of a central hub of buildings, some of which were the site of a stables serving the Fox and Goose, although the character of that part of the hamlet could be strengthened by restoring historic finishes to buildings. The cottages have probably encroached onto an earlier open space, or village green. The view looking south towards this fork in the road is an important one. Conversely, Rose Cottage which has an outlook to the west, forms a prominent focal point leading into the village from the west and Froghall.

Walls

4.8 Along the circuit path which circumnavigates the hamlet (now a public footpath), the track is partly lined with boundary walls and gate posts, although a number of sections have collapsed. To the north of the settlement there is sandstone outcropping. Large 'orthostat' walls fall along the boundaries of the crofts and the wider field boundaries in the earliest parts of the settlement. Walls around Brandon House Farm are much taller than the drystone boundary walls found along traditional field boundaries. These prevent clear views across the crofts and instead we see glimpses of rooftops, a particular characteristic.

Conservation Area Boundary

4.9 The boundary follows well-defined and distinct physical boundaries. The land to the south-east of the village of Foxt is included within the boundary as it is striking terrain, part of the cultivated and man-made, early, settled landscape. Land to the south and the east incorporates the old circuit path which wraps around the 'bluff', the steep escarpments and the main exposed geological formations of Chatsworth Grit, which define the hamlet. The boundary to the east stretches from the ancient holloway down to the watercourses in the valley, and the hand-made open landscape, leading to Hoff Clough, where clearance combined with the construction of part-orthostat walls, have scoured out a generous open setting to the hamlet, of free-draining soils, all of which forms an important open space and foil to development, particularly in views from Oldridge.

4.10 The boundary follows the lane and footpath on the northern side of the hamlet, but excludes the modern development of houses within the former Roycroft. Although this falls outside the proposed conservation area, it should be recognised as an area of archaeological potential.

4.11 The setting of conservation areas is not normally included within designations but there are exceptions, where the man-made landscape and the special historic interest are inseparable; the land forming the enclosures defines the character and appearance of the hamlet and the well-drained land to the south-east is part of the 'cleared' landscape, defined by 'orthostat' walls and framed by holloways, former packhorse or drovers roads. The northern boundary follows the alignment of a public footpath, which was established by the 1880s. It runs through one of the former crofts, part of Little Hoff, and includes the important 'orthostat' walls which follow an irregular alignment.

4.12 The southern boundary follows the steep cliff and bluffs, to enable the circuit footpath and lower croft to be incorporated into the conservation area. The low-lying water meadows along the valley bottom are excluded from the conservation area.

4.13 A review of the boundary undertaken as part of this appraisal, considered all of the developed land along 'The Casey' running from the Fox and Goose as far as Park Head. However, the level of alteration of properties and new development, combined with the nature of the development being strung out in micro-clusters along this journey, lacks the cohesive character of a

single area of special interest. The option of incorporating the route of the Spout Gutter as a linear link between all of the clusters was seriously considered. However, this has lost some of its integrity and is now largely an archaeological feature, despite its survival at Park Head. It is considered that this earthwork derives wider recognition and should be added to the Historic Environment Record as an identified constraint. Conservation Area designation would not in itself prevent the loss or piecemeal alteration of this earthwork.

4.14 The presence of a high level of industrial archaeological interest and transport networks within the valleys of Blackbank Brook and Shirley Brook is not related directly to the special interest of Foxt, the hamlet, and is set some distance apart. For these reasons, the conservation area has not included areas of industrial interest or cottages and houses associated with either the development of industry in the valley bottom close to the Froghall canal, or at Bolton's copper works.

5. ARCHITECTURAL & HISTORIC QUALITY

5.1 There are a relatively small number of historic buildings within the conservation area; these are mainly 17th or 18th century in origin, with a few dating from the early-mid 19th century. Buildings are described as clusters, which relate to historic farmsteads.

Historic Buildings

5.2 The earliest surviving buildings in the area are early 17th century in origin. There were five principal farms - Gate Farm, Bolton Farm, Manor Farm, Rock House Farm and Brandon House Farm. There may have been others, perhaps smaller and occupied by husbandmen farmers, such as Yew Tree Cottage, which has a datestone of 1690.

5.3 **Manor House** holds a commanding view looking west towards Mow Cop. It was built in 1862 for Thomas and Elizabeth Ball (a datestone - AD 1862 T & E B - survives in the rear gable). The introduction of the name 'manor house' was a mid 19th century fashion, and it may not have related to the site of a manor house, rather a Hall house. The house is quite large and imposing designed with raised stone quoins, Flemish bond brickwork to the front, stone-coped gables and mullioned windows (removed) with chamfered brick surrounds. It is very old-fashioned for its day and there was a clearly conscious effort to design a house which reflected the antiquity of the family, as the Ball family inherited the freehold from 1649, although were not named as one of the ancient tenants. The current owners confirm that the original beams of the previous house were re-used inside. The present house sits on a prominent ridge of gritstone, which outcrops to the rear, although its predecessor looked south and west, nestled between its complex of farm buildings. The house has formal gardens and a distinctive coursed stone boundary wall, which sets it apart.



5.4 The **coachhouse** at Manor Farm has shaped stone-coped gables and contains a small and quaint dovecote in the gable end, with three flight holes and ledges. This is probably 18th century in origin. There were a more extensive range of farm buildings, including pigsties, dairy and potato store or ice-house of substantial construction, which had been buried by a previous owner. The dark pink



gritstone farm buildings to the east, of which the lower part are probably 17th century, were split by a narrow 'cow lane', and the long range of barns served Bolton Farmhouse in 1849, forming a dispersed plan farm, whilst The Grange was farmed by Yewtree Cottage; there is evidence of extensive reapportionment of property taking place. To the east of Manor House is a stirk or **calf rearing house**, probably early C18, with upper hayloft, in fair condition. The barns, which once fell on the east side of a little lane, have been in a dilapidated condition for over 40 years, are imposing and contain the usual combination of cow byres, hay lofts and upper floor store houses. Other buildings are too ruined to identify their original function.



5.5 **Bolton Farmhouse (grade II)** - Bolton Farmhouse is an important 17th century farmhouse, of two storeys with attics, and with chamfered mullioned windows and cavetto drip moulds to the gable and rear elevation. It is built in mainly red gritstone and is the largest of the surviving 17th century yeoman farmhouses. It has a main outlook to the south, although that was not its original front elevation, which was via a lobby-entrance doorway in the north wall, later obscured by a lean-to porch. It has a big central chimney

stack serving back-to-back hearths. An original wrought iron farm gate has been re-hung and to enable vehicular access in its place a wider replica gate, with scrolled bracket, a lovely authentic detail.

5.6 The stone farm buildings at The Grange were once farmed by the occupants of Bolton Farm; they form an important and prominent cluster, a focal point of the lane. The main barn to the lane contains at least four phases of mellow pink stonework, and has lost a stone-coped gable; the visible traces of the earlier forms of the agricultural uses is a testament to the longevity of the hamlet.



5.7 **Brandon House Farm** and **Brandon House** are two distinct properties but were once part of the same complex. The stone-built Brandon House Farm may have 17th century origins, possibly a raised eaves, although this has been obscured externally. It retains a tiled roof and unusual large quoins to the upper windows, which are possibly re-used quoins from the former southern gable. It has lost its original stone-coped gables. It would merit detailed investigation and recording. Its rear barn contains part of a cruck frame. Brandon House was built between 1843 and 1881, and is brick in common with Manor House.



5.8 Rock House Farm

The barn closest to the road has been rebuilt in recent times, but a number of the other barns appear to have 17th or 18th century origins. The original gritstone farmhouse has an end bay entrance to the south, possibly originally a lobby entrance to the north (?) and a substantial stack with back-to-back hearths. Given the plan form, it probably has 17th century origins, and appears to have been remodelled in the early 19th century. It is an important building deserving further investigation.



5.9 Gate Farmhouse & Barn (both grade II)

The farmhouse is dated 1624, and is the oldest known building in the 'Old Town'. The historic fabric is very well preserved, with most of its original window and door openings, and it sits perched on its own small hillock above the lane, prominent and picturesque. The house contains three bays of which the furthest bay was separated to form independent accommodation, a rare survival. It is not a true two storey dwelling as the first floor is contained part within the roof, served by a gable-end window and a single stone-coped dormer with the datestone. The building contains two Tudor-arched doorways, once later blocked, forming a cross passage.



5.10 The barn is reputedly late 17th century, formerly a cow-house, probably heightened with copings re-used to form a hayloft (as was the barn at Manor House), but the detached garage to the farmhouse is also a 17th century building, with substantial masonry and deep plinth, modified.

Historic Buildings along ‘The Casey’:

5.11 Along the route of the Casey, the packhorse route which was formalised, are smithies and public houses, one developed with stabling to accommodate packhorse traffic (now the Fox and Goose), although reputedly for horses carrying coal and iron ore.

5.12 **The Fox and Goose**, and its former stabling opposite, later converted into dwellings, and most of which was demolished in 1968, form an important historic cluster. Formerly known as The Hollybush, the original date of the Fox and Goose is not known, but the block-mullioned windows on the rear wing and its formal character suggest that it was built in the second half of the 18th century and was initially built to face the roadway. It was probably extended to provide accommodation for travellers during a period of increased traffic.



5.13 **The Malthouse**, which stands to the south of the pub, was probably used by the landlord during the making and brewing of beer on the premises. Although converted to a dwelling, it retains its simple, non-domestic character to the lane.



5.14 **Brook Cottage** is a well-preserved historic dwelling, with its original wrought-iron railings, spear-topped with urn finials, of the early 19th century.



Endstone Well

The spring which is known as ‘Endstone Well’ does not contain the remains of any dressed stone surround, but its presence is marked on the north side of the footpath by an old flight of steps (right) which led down from the village.



6. PROBLEMS, PRESSURES & CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

Loss of footpaths, lanes and boundary walls

6.1 A number of the narrow stone walled lanes separating the crofts have been 'stopped up' during the last century, and in recent years, and removed from public access. Some of the original walls, separating the crofts, have also been removed in recent years and the historic settlement pattern is at risk of being significantly harmed by lack of recognition of its rarity and early origins.

Changes to drystone walls

6.2 The presence of large up-ended stones and boulders in the base of walls is generally thought to indicate early settlement, as the largest boulders were probably rolled here when the fields were first created, cleared and enclosed, as woodland was assarted. Diagnostic features of early walls may include the presence of large boulders and orthostats, though absolute dating is not possible. Drystone walls of the modern type were probably rare before the 16th century and these differences should be preserved.

6.3 Boundaries surrounding the enclosures are also built from large rounded stones, many a dark red colour from lichen and iron staining within the sandstone, and many taller than average drystone walls.

6.4 The highly distinctive character of the Foxt walls is at risk from being lost by both collapse of walls and drystone walling practices which do not preserve the local characteristics; within the Ipstones and Foxt area some replacement walls are over-worked, with dressed stones, without simply placing existing stones judiciously in the wall to follow the local, rugged characteristics.

Loss of traditional or historic finishes and boundary walls

6.5 The boundary wall serving the Fox and Goose pub has been completely removed and replaced with a concrete kerb and a prominent forecourt of tarmac. Whilst there are access constraints with visibility for emerging traffic, restoration of some of the stone-walled enclosure would considerably enhance the character of the settlement.

6.6 The pub has had a large number of alterations and extensions, including black-and-white timbering and upvc windows and conservatory, which have obscured its age and authenticity. Considerable works could be undertaken to restore and enhance its Moorlands character.

6.7 Likewise, Yew Tree Cottage has been considerably altered with timber-framed walls. Some of the original masonry of 1690 is still visible and its presence in the hamlet could be enhanced and its significance better revealed through judicious unpicking of some additions, such as modern canopies.

Additional development and loss of crofts

6.8 Foxt is special for the rare surviving relationship of farmstead and enclosure or croft within the earliest settled part of the village. The introduction of new housing on crofts within this historic pattern of development would cause considerable harm to this 'essence.' Prior to the conservation area designation and adoption of the character appraisal, there have been a number of recent housing developments approved within the centre of Foxt. The designation of the conservation

area and adoption of the character appraisal will in future, be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and help guide appropriate development. The development of linear housing in one of the original crofts along the northern edge of the settlement has already led to this being excluded from the proposed conservation area boundary.

Setting & Views

6.9 As a settlement with prominence in long distance views across the landscape, from Ipstones, Kingsley, Shirley Common, and Oldridge, the settlement of Foxt is positioned on a prominent band of Chatsworth Grit sandstone, where it outcrops at the head of the valley.

6.10 The highest point of the early settlement, being 265 metres AOD, is comparable with the height of the church in Ipstones, and this means that, although small, it has a strong presence in views, particularly from Ipstones and the B5053, where the later development along 'The Casey', creates a more emphatic presence.

6.11 The presence of Foxt in views across the landscape, and whether or how it had a strategic role as a settlement, is not fully understood. Views of the Manor House from the B5053 south of Ipstones suggest that the house was deliberately placed in the 19th century to command views across the landscape. Its predecessor was nested between its farmbuildings and did not have a relationship with inward and outward views. There was no historic grand conscious design and the placement of buildings was related to topographical constraints within each 'parcel' or 'croft' - the result is a serendipitous picturesque character. Development which affects the isolated setting of the hamlet has the potential to cause harm.

7. GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AREA

Buildings

7.1 The nature of the settlement, with its large, relatively inaccessible, crofts for modern farming practices, tractors and machinery, has both preserved the settlement pattern but also led to the lack of viability of farms, as their land-locked nature has prevented expansion. The lack of modern farm sheds is indicative of non-working farms. This has in turn affected the character of the settlement and many of the farm buildings have fallen out of use, some are in a ruinous state. Manor House in particular, has four or five historic buildings which have no viable use; several are in an advanced state of dereliction, with the heightened risk that they will be lost forever.

7.2 In view of this set of conditions, it will be important that future viability of these groups of buildings recognises the intrinsic value of the particularly important historic farm buildings (which may be beyond normally accepted conversion criteria), prevents fragmentation of the crofts, formal subdivision, and breaches in the boundary walls, whilst enabling uses which preserve the buildings, their relationships and plan form. It is important to recognise that here at least agricultural use for all the buildings is unlikely to be tenable; home-based businesses are ideal for new uses but the hamlet is unlikely to be able to sustain holiday cottages throughout. The more significant farms are those where the whole farmstead can still be understood. For example, new uses have been found for the farm buildings at Gate Farm and Rock House Farm. Proposals for new uses should use the Staffordshire Farmstead Assessment Framework.

Landscape and Ecology

7.3 The current assessment has not included an assessment of the local ecology within the landscape. Consideration of the wider links between the landscape within the conservation area and the SSSI along the valley is recommended.

Trees

7.4 The important, visually significant trees within and around the proposed conservation area are marked on Figure 3 - Indicative Tree Cover. Tree positions have been estimated not measured, and so should not necessarily be regarded as accurate. All surveying/estimating was carried out from public highways or public rights of way.

7.5 Any representation of existing trees should not be regarded as exhaustive – the fact that any particular tree/group/woodland is not shown does not necessarily mean it would not be considered significant and trees should not be interpreted on the plans as necessarily accurate in terms of numbers and relative sizes of trees, nor actual extent of groups/woodlands.

7.6 The tree condition (physiological or structural) and tree safety have not been assessed as part of this appraisal.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended areas of future investigation or focus:

- A programme of recording important walls as they stand should be instigated
- Targeted evaluation of sites with archaeological potential
- Identification of key buildings for focussed repair
- Designation of all publicly accessible paths and 'cow lanes' as public footpaths or RUPPS (roads used as public paths), in recognition of their historic communal use over centuries

FURTHER ADVICE AND INFORMATION

For further advice and information please contact the Regeneration team at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council & High Peak Borough Council:

Tel: 0345 6053013

Email: regeneration@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk

National Organisations:

Historic England,

10 Holliday St, BIRMINGHAM B1 1TG

tel: 0121 625 6820

www.HistoricEngland.org.uk



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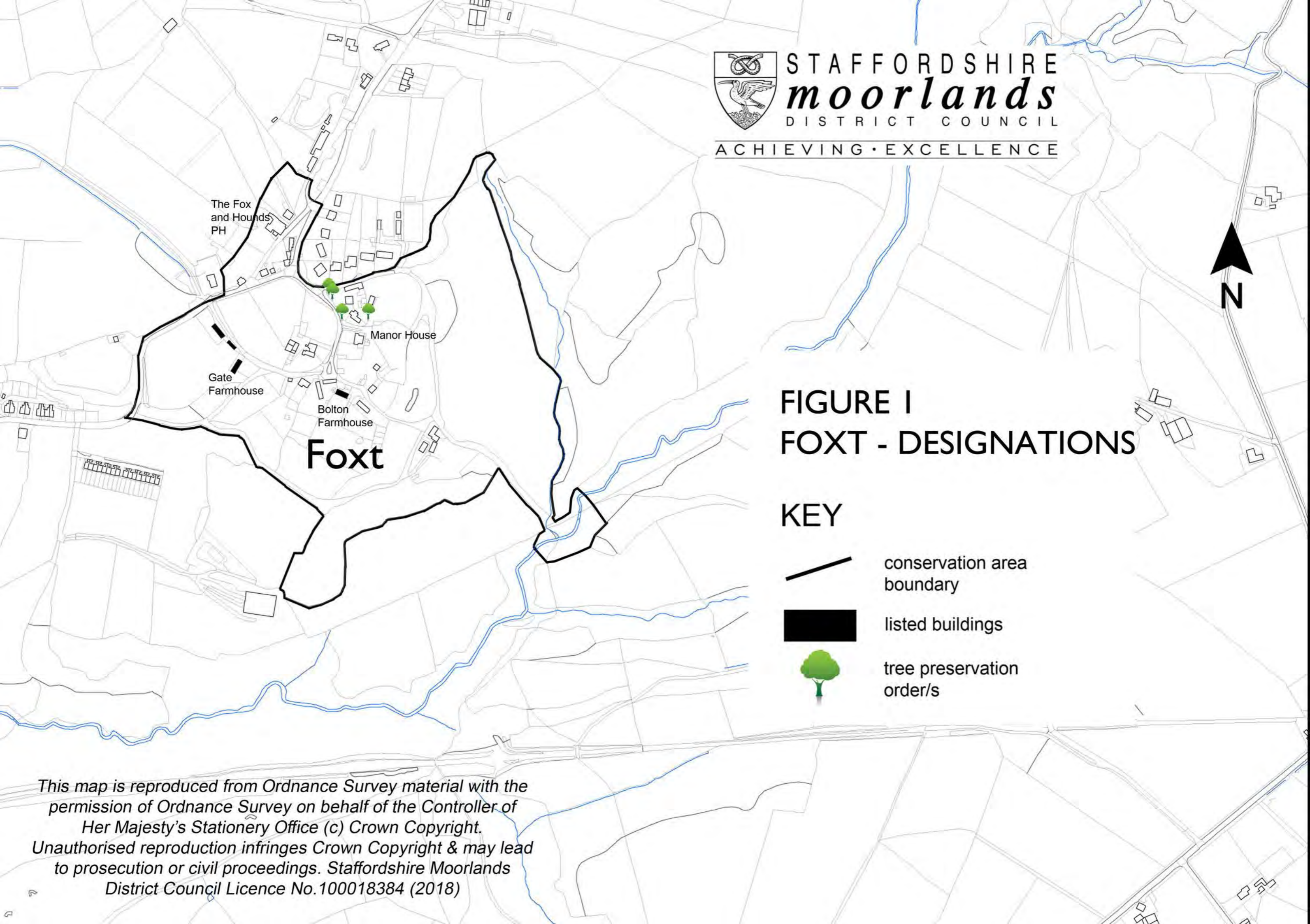


FIGURE I
FOXT - DESIGNATIONS

KEY



conservation area
boundary

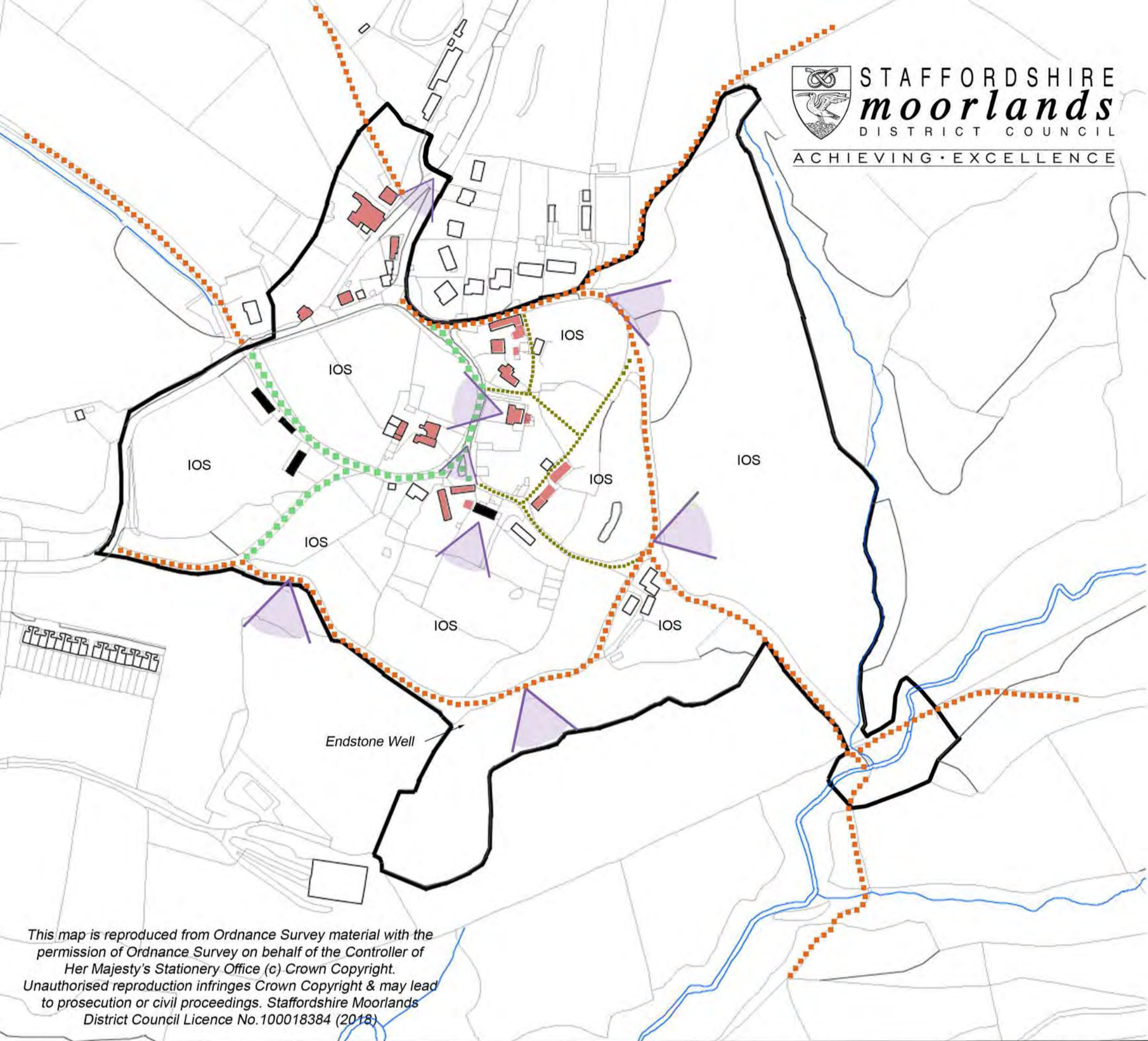


listed buildings



tree preservation
order/s

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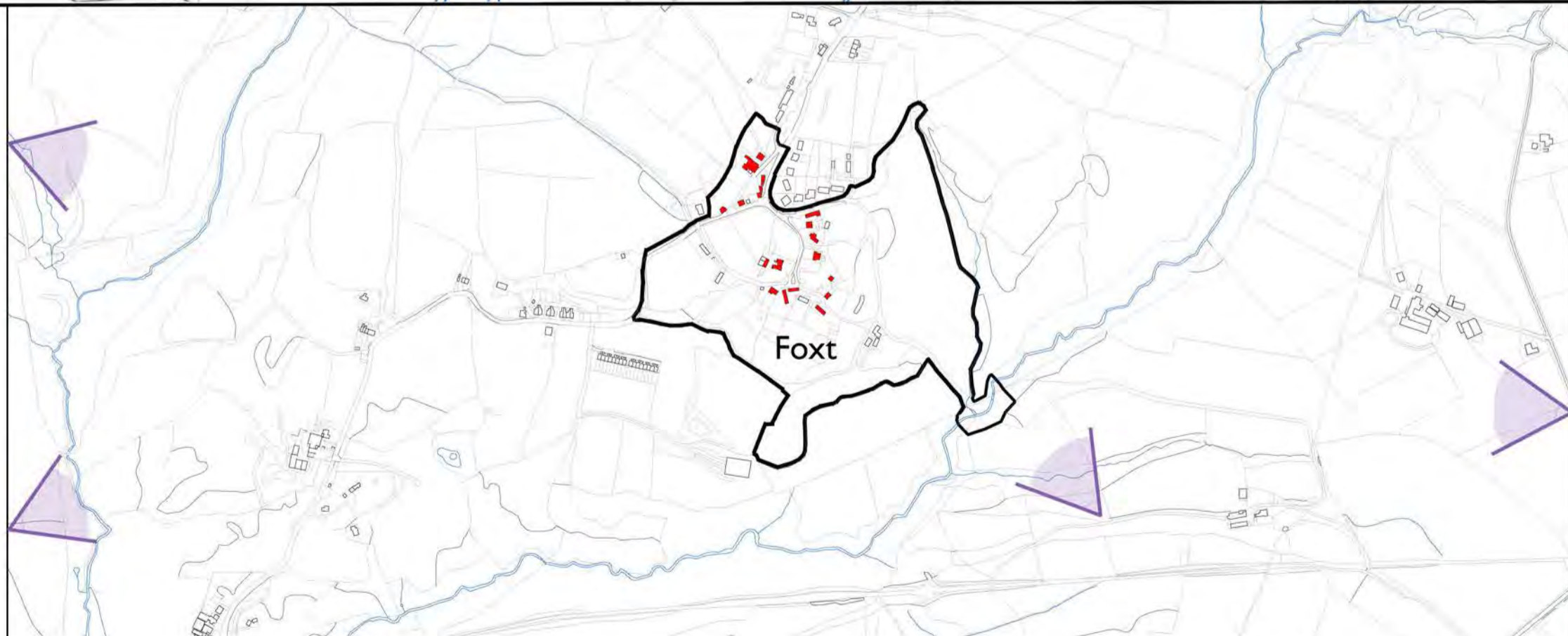


FIGURE 2 - FOXT SPATIAL ANALYSIS

-  conservation area boundary
 -  positive buildings
 -  listed buildings
 -  panoramic view
 -  public footpath / right of way
 -  historic footpath / lane (blocked or removed, as of January 2018)
 -  existing important footpath / lane
- Note: for the current definitive rights of way contact Staffordshire County Council

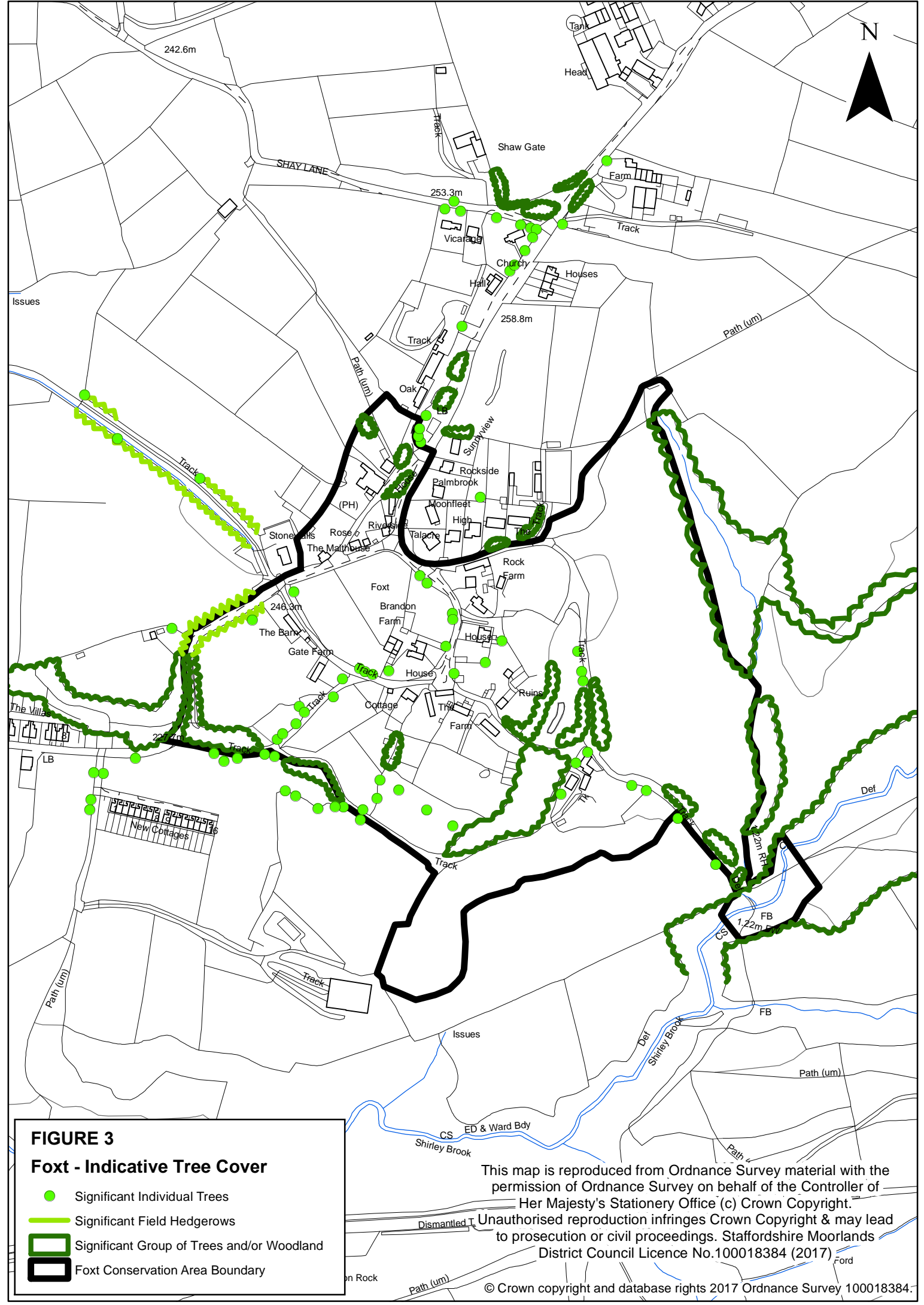


FIGURE 3

Foxt - Indicative Tree Cover

- Significant Individual Trees
- Significant Field Hedgerows
- Significant Group of Trees and/or Woodland
- Foxt Conservation Area Boundary

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