

Cynllun Gwella Ardal Gadwraeth Nelson

Nelson Conservation Area Enhancement Plan

Medi 2003/September 2003



SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

1. RELATIONSHIP TO THE UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND OTHER STRATEGIES

1.1 Supplementary Planning Guidance is a package of documents that supports and gives more detail to the county borough's Unitary Development Plan 1996 – 2011 (UDP). Supplementary Planning Guidance can also support and give effect to other strategies including the Caerphilly Community Strategy by providing a positive and detailed land use planning framework for implementation of those strategies. There are two broad types of Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- **Action Plans** which contain programmes of action for specific locations, developing in more detail the policies of the UDP and the Community Strategy (e.g. Town Centre Action Plans, Conservation Area Enhancement Plans, Village Action Plans, Park Development Plans)
- **Design Guides** which set out in detail the standards which development conforming to the policy criteria of the UDP is expected to meet in terms of layout and design (e.g. Development Design Guides and Site Development Briefs)

1.2 The Action Plans and Design Guides are consistent with UDP policies because they are based on them. They give detail to how those policies should be implemented. Supplementary Planning Guidance is therefore a material consideration in planning policy terms.

2. CONSERVATION AREA ENHANCEMENT PLANS

2.1 A Conservation Area Enhancement Plan is required by statute, for each conservation area. It contains an analysis of the conservation area's special character and proposals to enhance that character. In Caerphilly county borough, each conservation area enhancement plan will be complemented by a conservation area design guide - a separate document. The Enhancement Plan provides a programme of action to be implemented principally by the Council, but also by other concerned local groups or organisations. The Enhancement Plan may be used to support bids for grant aid to enable the programme to be implemented.

2.2 This is done in ways which are consistent with the other Guiding Principles of the Unitary Development Plan, 'Sustaining the identity and vitality of settlements' and 'Sustainability' terms.

3. PUBLICITY AND CONSULTATION

3.1 In order to ensure that the interests of local people, public bodies and other interested parties are taken fully into account, public consultation takes place at each stage of production of the Supplementary Planning Guidance. The consultation process allows representations to be made supporting or objecting to the contents of the document, or to suggest further proposals to be included in it. The consultation process helps to give Supplementary Planning Guidance legitimacy and strength. After a full consultation process, the document has been revised and has been formally adopted by the county borough council on the 31st July 2003

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1 Environmental Appraisal

- 1.1 **Nelson Conservation Area** lies at the centre of the village, focused upon the original settlement including The Square. The main body of the Conservation Area runs to the west along High Street as far as St. John's Church. (See Map 1.) The original street pattern and cottages are still evident along High Street. Capel Penuel, Salem Chapel and St. John's Church all add historic character. The Square lies on Commercial Street, one of the main routes into Nelson. The open nature of The Square and high levels of traffic mean that the environmental quality of this space is well below its potential.

Positive Features (See Map 1)

- 1.2 The **Handball Court** situated on the Square, is a historic and unique feature of the village. It is a grade II listed building which dates from around 1860. Nelson Handball Court is thought to be the only surviving example in Britain.
- 1.3 **The Square** was one of the earliest developments in the village and was once an important focal point of the centre. Although a little lacking in atmosphere, The Square still has much potential to become a key space in the heart of the Conservation Area.
- 1.4 The **War Memorial** is a grade II listed building because of its traditional cenotaph design and historical interest.
- 1.5 The **old Police Station** has been converted into a restaurant and still retains much of its original character.
- 1.6 The **Village Inn** and the **Royal Oak Public Houses** are important both in terms of the historical character of the village and the streetscape. The Village Inn is an attractive stone building, one of the oldest in Nelson. The Royal Oak has been the meeting place for the handball team since the early days and it holds an important position on The Square.
- 1.7 The original street pattern is still evident on **High Street** and there are several cottages that still retain some of their original characteristics despite widespread alterations.
- 1.8 **Capel Penuel** and **Salem Chapel** are both in good condition and both feature strongly in the street scene.
- 1.9 **St John's Church** with its grounds and mature trees forms an important landmark in the village. The Rectory opposite is a large stone building set well back from the road but which also adds character and interest to High Street.



The Village Inn (1.6)



The Rectory (1.9)

- 1.10 Enhancement plans for three neighbouring areas of the village are in production. This gives an important opportunity for an **holistic approach to enhancement** in Nelson.
- 1.11 The **main route to Llancaiach Fawr** runs through the Conservation Area. (Llancaiach Fawr is one of only two Grade I Listed Buildings in the County Borough.) This means that many tourists and visitors to the locality pass through the Nelson's historic core.

Negative Features

- 1.12 Improvements and alterations to the properties in the area and while well intentioned have been made by residents in a piecemeal and uncoordinated way. Many **extensions and alterations** have been made to properties within the Conservation Area. Although these developments are in themselves minor, they combine to the detriment of the character of the area.
- 1.13 Within the Conservation Area there is little coordination of **colour schemes, materials and finishes**. This wide variation detracts from the continuity of the street scene. The Conservation Area Design Guide contains advice for householders and businesses on a variety of issues, including suitable colours and types of materials. This guide encourages the use of more appropriate, high quality materials and in time a rationalisation of the currently confusing range of colours and finishes.
- 1.14 **The Square** at present is a very open space and it lacks something of an atmosphere. This is a pity given its prominent position and its past importance to the life of the village.
- 1.15 A group of properties on **Commercial Street** have been converted to retail use. Several of these properties have an untidy appearance that detracts from the character of the area.
- 1.16 The area to the **south of High Street** consists of some infill modern housing and several warehouses. Both of these developments are at odds with the character of the Conservation Area. Although they do not have a presence on either of the main streets, both are visible along High Close and the access lane off High Street.
- 1.17 There is no **interpretive signage** to inform either the resident or the visitor to Nelson of the Conservation Area or of the Handball Court. This seems a missed opportunity taking account of the location on the tourist route to Llancaiach Fawr and hence the potential to draw in passers-by / tourists.
- 1.18 **Street furniture** in Nelson is scarce and ill matched, especially in The Square .



Diversity of materials and colours (1.13)



Warehouses south of High Street (1.16)

- 1.19 The **pavements** in the Conservation Area have been patched and repaired in sections over many years. There is little continuity of materials or finish, which gives an untidy appearance.
- 1.20 The centre of Nelson suffers from an abundance of **overhead cables** that have a negative and distracting impact on the streetscape.

2 Proposals

2.1 The Square

This space at present lacks a sense of atmosphere and intimacy. It does however have the potential to be a focal point of the village as it has been in the past. An enhancement scheme in this area could greatly improve the sense of place and result in more use of the space by locals and visitors alike.

NCA 1 A new building or feature will be built on the southern side of The Square to enclose the space.

A building or feature on the southern side of The Square would help give a sense of enclosure to the space making it a more pleasant space to be in. Proposals for this space extend outside the Conservation Area. An appropriate gateway feature will be developed in this area as part of the development site to the east of the Handball Court. (See Site Development Brief – Land to the east of the Handball Court, Nelson.)

NCA 2 A study of The Square will be undertaken to assess how the use of the space can be improved.

The completion of NCA 1 will allow a comprehensive enhancement scheme to be developed for The Square that will emphasise its importance with the Handball Court as its focus. The scheme will include seating, interpretation, lighting, environmental improvements as well as improved pedestrian facilities.

2.2 The War Memorial

In its present position on Commercial Street, the War Memorial is easily overlooked. It lacks the impressive setting it deserves and the space that is required for the Remembrance Day ceremony.

NCA 3 The present setting of the War Memorial will be enhanced. A detailed design brief will be drawn up to achieve this.

The War Memorial will also be discussed as a key feature of Nelson in both the Village Centre Action Plan and the Site Development Brief (Land to the east of the Handball Court, Nelson). It is appreciated that as the War Memorial is listed, any works would need to be carried out sensitively, with Listed Building Consent if necessary and in agreement with the British Legion.

2.3 Area to the South of High Street

This is an area of modern housing and warehouse development. It is unattractive and is in places highly visible from High Street. This was an area of open space when the Conservation Area was designated and has since been subject to infill development. The area does not fit easily into

the Conservation Area designation, as it has none of the qualities of the remainder and detracts from the overall character.

NCA 4 The Conservation Area boundary will be reviewed and revised so as to remove this area from the designation.

A revision of the boundary will strengthen the concept of a Conservation Area in Nelson by focusing more tightly on the original, historic core of the village.

General Proposals

2.4 Lighting

NCA 5 A new sympathetically designed lighting scheme will be introduced into the Conservation Area to help create an improved atmosphere and sense of place.

Traditional style street lighting will be introduced into the Conservation Area to help improve the atmosphere in the village at night. New lighting in The Square in particular will add to the improvements suggested earlier. More details on the style and design of the lighting scheme can be found in the Nelson Conservation Area Design Guide.

2.5 Overhead cables

NCA 6 The Council will seek the removal of overhead electricity and telephone cables from the Conservation Area. Proposals to underground cables whenever possible will be supported.

The abundance of unsightly overhead cables is not appropriate in a conservation setting. The under grounding of cables will remove the negative impact but it can be expensive and will be dependant on the co-operation of the utility companies.

2.6 Street furniture

NCA 7 Traditional style street furniture will be introduced into the Conservation Area. The bus shelter on High Street will be replaced with one of a more sympathetic style.

A coordinated scheme of street furniture would improve the aesthetic appearance of the area and the use of the village centre by pedestrians. The furniture will be of a high quality and traditional style so as to complement the historic character of the area. The Council will consider an appropriate design for a new bus shelter on High Street which take reference from the surrounding building form and also meet the specifications of the Council's Highway Division.

2.7 Shop fronts

NCA 8 The Council will encourage businesses to redevelop and maintain their premises and shop fronts.

Within the Conservation Area there are some good examples of traditional style shop fronts. Other units within the area could also benefit from similar investment. More advice on style and design can be found in the Nelson Conservation Area Design Guide. The Council runs a Commercial Improvement Grant programme that could be utilised to provide assistance, subject to certain conditions.

2.8 Pavements

NCA 9 The poorer sections of pavement will be re-laid in more sympathetic materials to the character and setting when the opportunity arises.

The street scene would benefit aesthetically if there were more continuity in terms of the material and finishes of the pavements in the area. Paving will be re-laid on a phased basis with the poorer sections being implemented first.

2.9 Signage

NCA 10 Signs indicating the presence of the Conservation Area will be positioned at the entrances to the Conservation Area.

It would be beneficial to make more of Nelson's position on the tourist route to Llancaiach Fawr. Signs indicating the existence of the Conservation Area and points of interest could raise awareness and encourage those passing through Nelson to stop.

3 Implementation and Funding

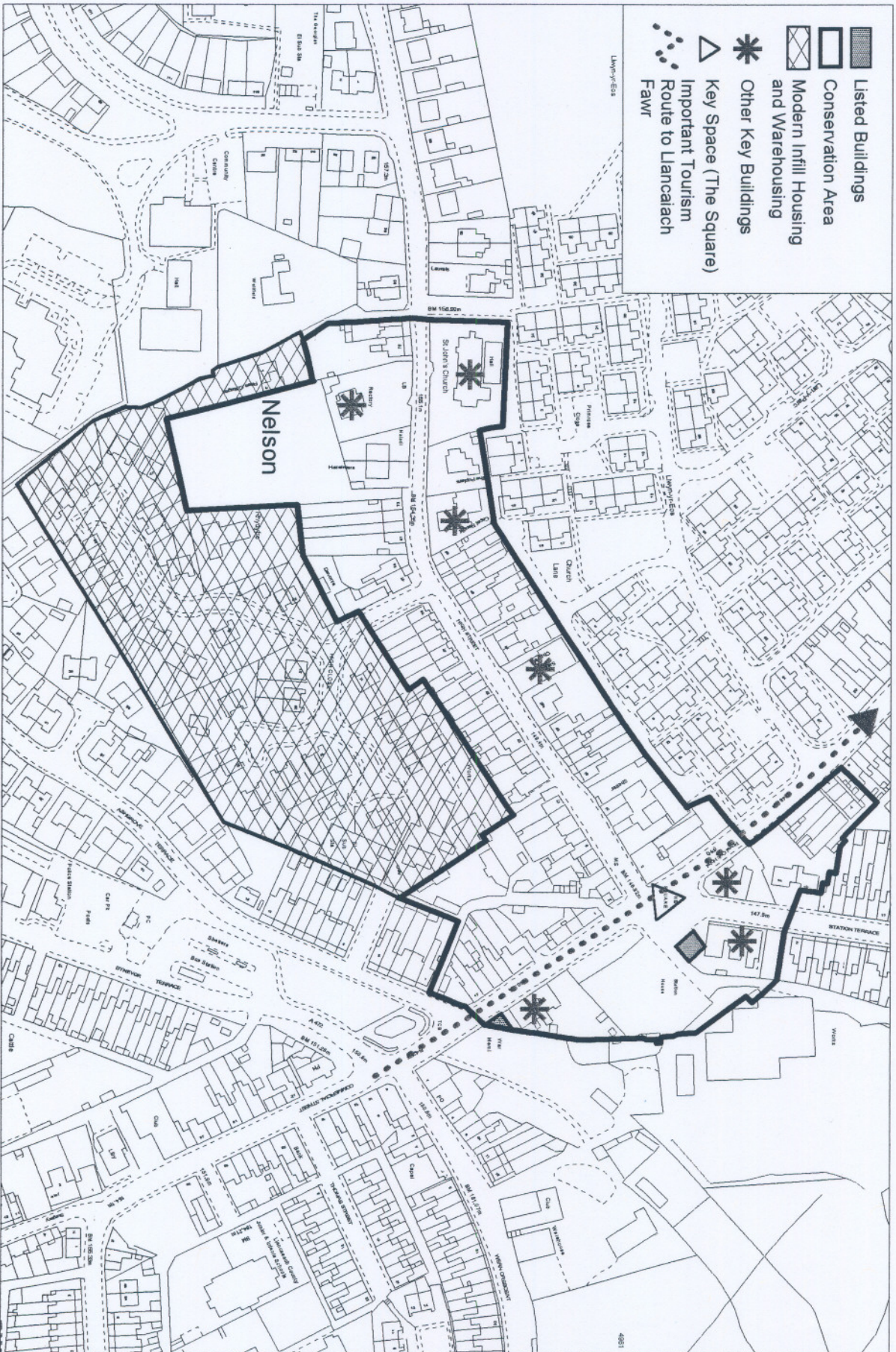
3.1 The Council will seek to implement these proposals over a period of years as and when funding becomes available.

3.2 The Council has a small annual budget (around £30,000) for Conservation works throughout the County Borough, which could be used for conservation area enhancement. If there is an approved Conservation Area Enhancement Plan, however, there is a greater chance of attracting finance from other sources such as Lottery and urban regeneration funds. Some works may be able to be carried out as part of the Council's regular maintenance and replacement programmes in areas such as paving and street lighting. Other improvements may be implemented as part of private sector developments. The first step is to agree what needs to be done.

3.3 The Council will seek to obtain the co-operation and participation of landowners, business communities and residents to promote the proposals to enhance the architectural heritage of Nelson Conservation Area.

Map 1 Environmental Appraisal of Nelson Conservation Area

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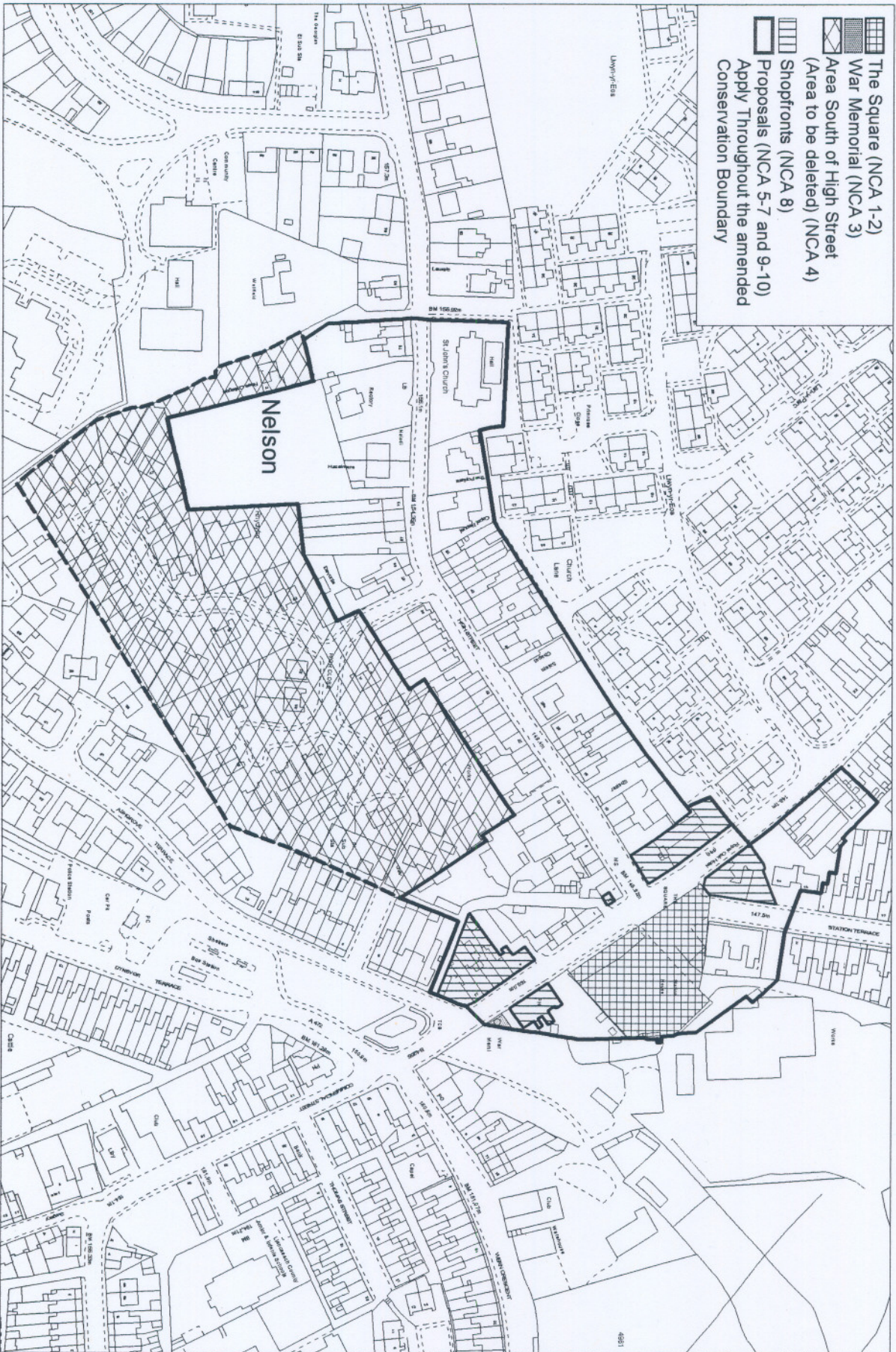


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Map 2 Proposals

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