LEEK Neighbourhood Plan

2025-2035

Submission Version V3.2
September 2026





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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Status of the Neighbourhood Plan

The Leek Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Leek Town Council working with the Leek Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and includes policies to shape development in the Leek area. The plan has been made against the context of significant global and local challenges, including climate change, different work patterns and vitality of the Town Centre. The Plan is based on the following vision:

> **Leek – a place to enjoy, work and thrive: Our aim is to continue to develop and enhance Leek as an attractive and vibrant place, that promotes and protects its built and natural heritage. This will provide an excellent quality of life, with improved connectivity, facilities and services for residents and visitors alike.**

The Neighbourhood Plan contains planning policies, which will be used in the determination of planning applications. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory development plan, together with the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the policies of the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

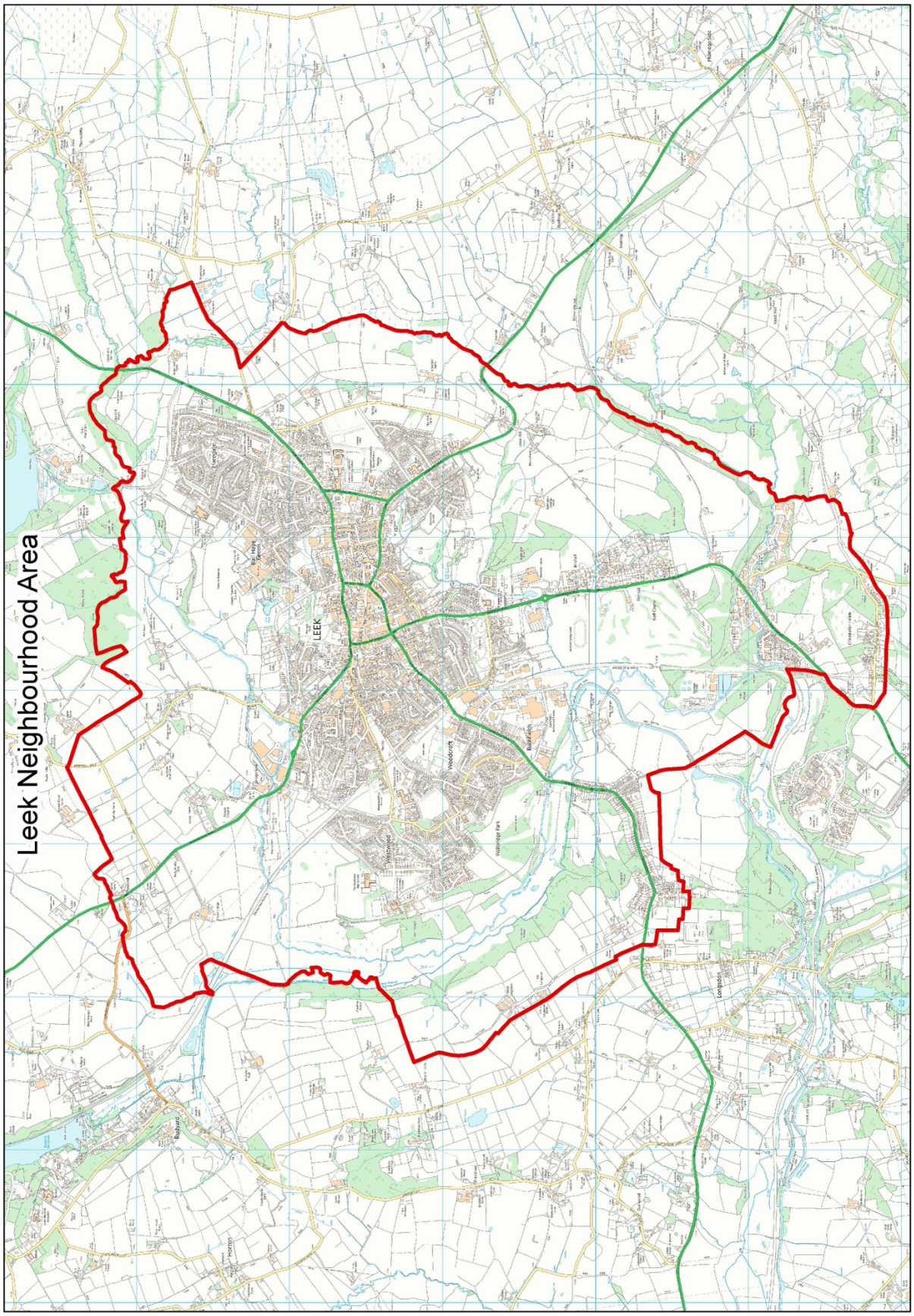
The period for which the Leek Neighbourhood Plan will have effect is from the date it is made until the end of 2035.

1.2 Implementation, Monitoring, Review

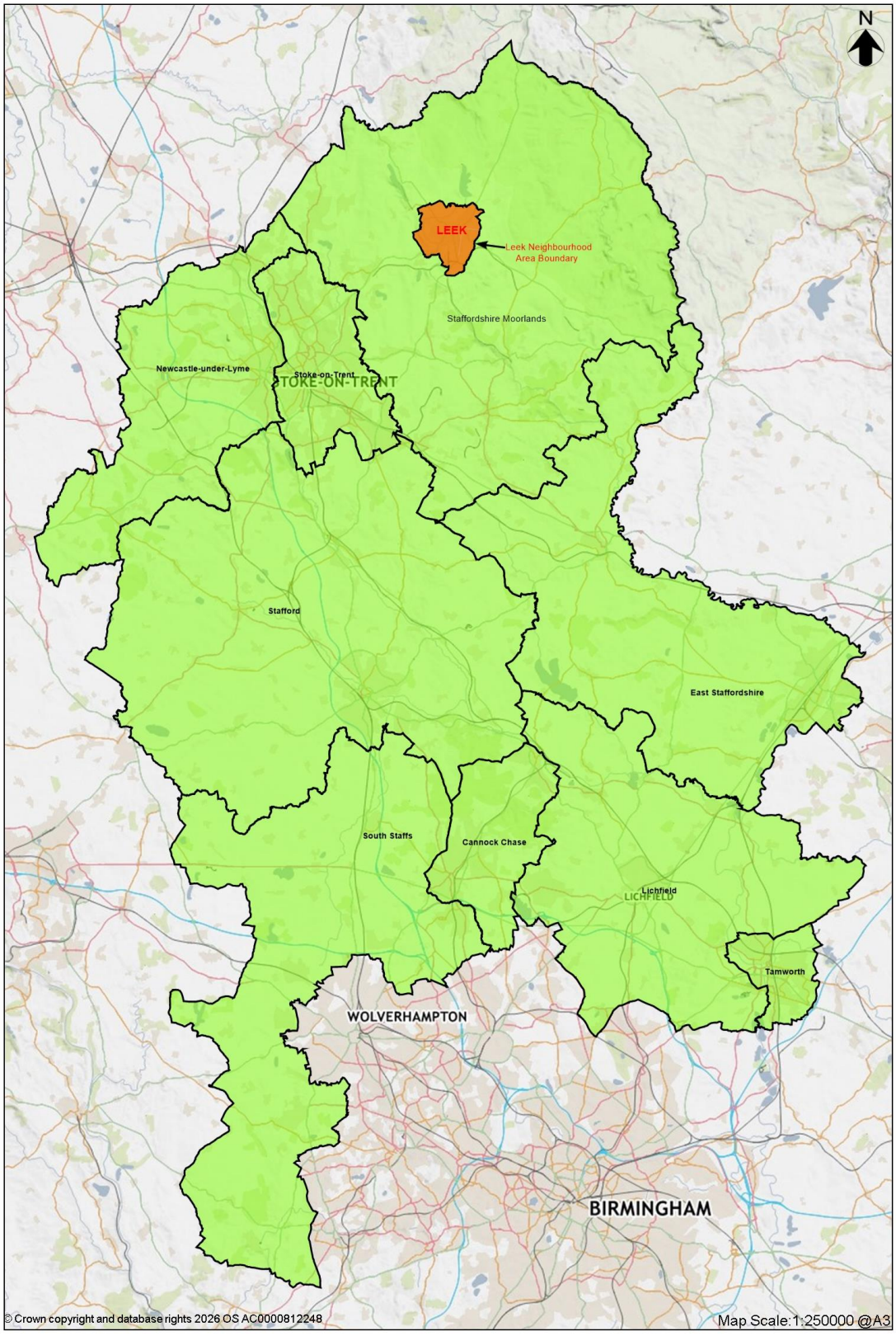
The Neighbourhood Plan will be used by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, as part of the development management process. Leek Town Council will use the plan as a basis for making representations on planning applications.

Leek Town Council will monitor the plan, including monitoring of planning decisions. Changes to national and local policy will also be monitored. Where necessary, the Town Council will consider revising and updating of the plan.

Map 1: Designated Leek Neighbourhood Area.



Map 2: Position of Leek in the Staffordshire



2. Background

2.1 The Leek Neighbourhood Area

2.1.1 Location and Context

Leek is a historic market town and its rural environs. It is the largest town in the Staffordshire Moorlands. To the southwest of the North Staffordshire conurbation, comprising the City of Stoke-on-Trent and the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme. Leek is on the edge of the Peak District National Park. The neighbourhood area has the Town as its focus and includes housing estates, employment sites and the surrounding urban fringe and rural areas.

The town is served by various road links to surrounding areas and a limited range of bus services. At present there is no train station, but the often-expressed intention is to reopen the line linking Leek to Stoke-on-Trent in the near future.

2.1.2 The Town and Environs

Leek has a diverse built heritage, including the historic town centre with buildings by Richard Norman Shaw and the Sugden architectural practice and the former house of William Morris. Industrial heritage ranges from mill buildings to the Caldon Canal (canal pioneer, James Brindley, lived in Leek).

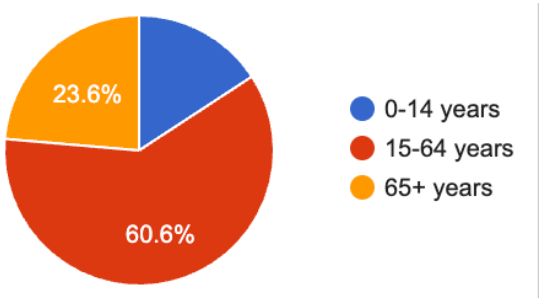
Leek is also a destination for visitors, with range of attractions, including pubs, independent shops, cafes and restaurants, antique dealers, the Foxlowe Arts Centre and the Maude Institute. There is also the Nicholson Institute, containing an art gallery, library and museum with local archives on display. The indoor market, weekly Charter Markets and the popular monthly artisan market are all popular tourism attractions. All Saint's Church is a Grade One listed building and is famous for its embroidery, sometimes on display. Tourism is considered an important economic driver locally.

Local industries include chemicals, food manufacturing, financial services and tourism. There is also a weekly farmers cattle and sheep market.

2.1.3 Key Demographics (2021 Census)

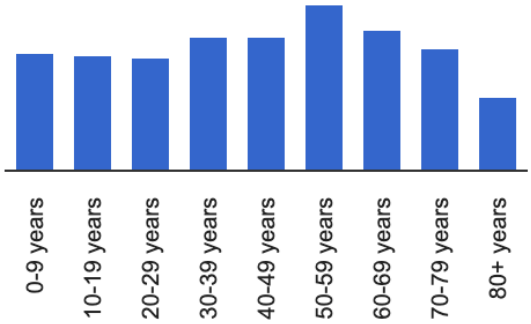
Age Groups

0-14 years	3,063
15-64 years	11,745
65+ years	4,584



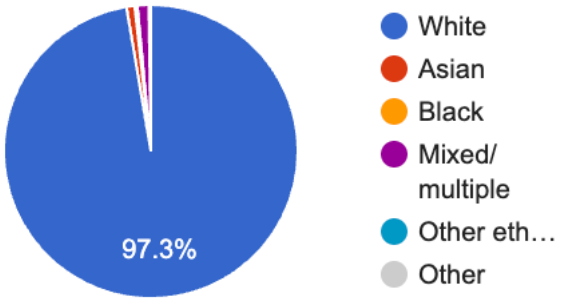
Age Distribution

0-9 years	2,025
10-19 years	2,003
20-29 years	1,975
30-39 years	2,323
40-49 years	2,318
50-59 years	2,896
60-69 years	2,449
70-79 years	2,127
80+ years	1,276

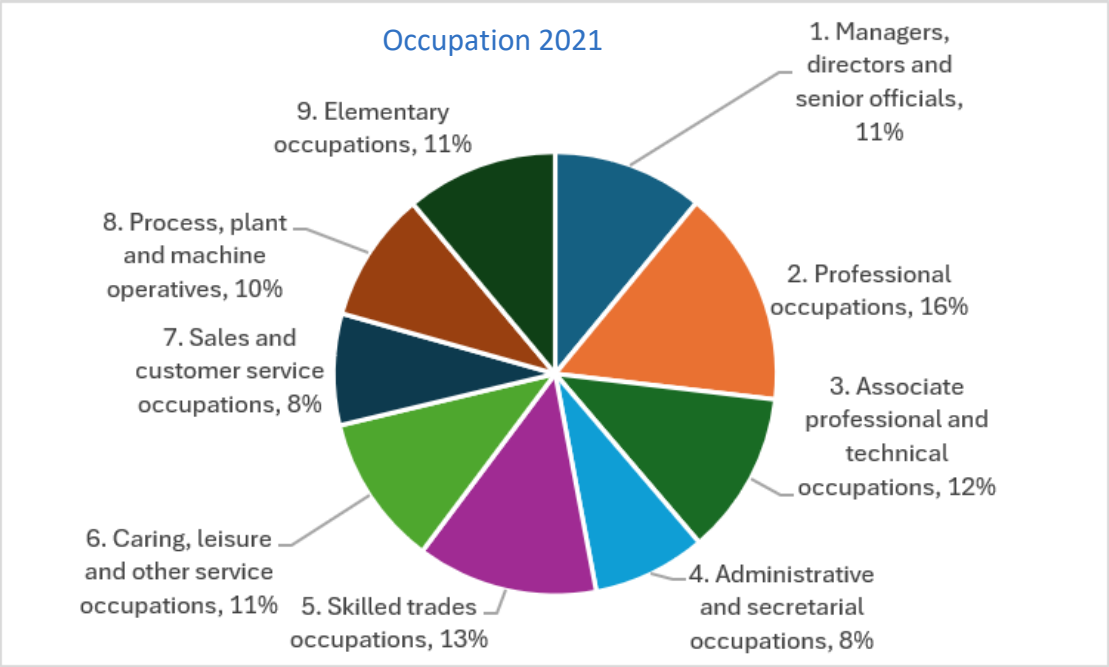


Ethnic Group

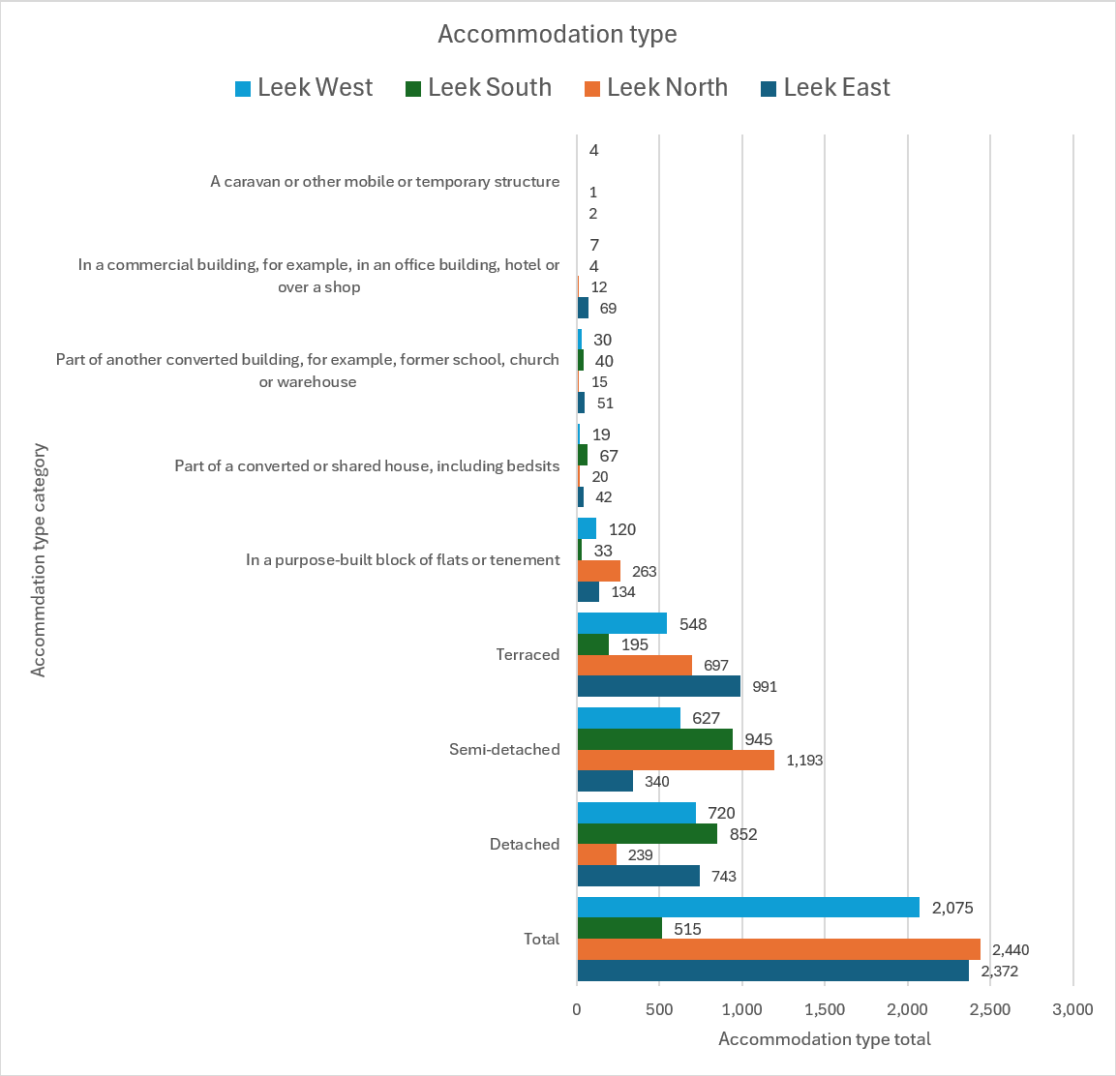
White	18,850
Asian	175
Black	56
Arab	6
Mixed/multiple	243
Other ethnic group	37



Occupation


Occupation 2021
1. Managers, directors and senior officials, 11%
2. Professional occupations, 16%
3. Associate professional and technical occupations, 12%
4. Administrative and secretarial occupations, 8%
5. Skilled trades occupations, 13%
6. Caring, leisure and other service occupations, 11%
7. Sales and customer service occupations, 8%
8. Process, plant and machine operatives, 10%
9. Elementary occupations, 11%

Housing Accommodation Type



All Graphs, Office for National Statistics.

2.2 Community Engagement

Community engagement was carried out in different stages. Early engagement included:

Initial community meeting, Leek Fire Station (June 2018) - to establish the reasoning for a NP and seeking "what the community liked about Leek and what they didn't". This informed the later questionnaire.

Other community meetings were held at the following venues:

Leek Bowling Club (July 2018)
Foxlowe Arts Centre (July 2018)
Community, Westwood School (2018)
East End, Hare & Gate pub (2018)
Leek Fire Station (Nov 2019)

Questionnaire - a questionnaire was issued in 2018.

Totally Locally Market – two stalls were held at different months in 2018, involving handing out questionnaires.
Leek Sainsburys – evening session to hand out and receive questionnaires (July 2018)

Love Leek Website launched (April 2019).

Presentation to SMDC Councillors, SMDC (October 2019) - a presentation to councillors and the community, to establish findings and to circulate the initial questionnaires to establish their suitability. They were filled in and it was agreed that they would work with the rest of the community.

Early engagement highlighted various strengths for the area, including:

- Unique character of the Town Centre, with a good range of independent shops, cafes, restaurants, pubs, market.
- A lively arts and music scene and good range of sports and recreational events.
- Rich built heritage.
- Good local services, including surgeries, schools, churches, the Nicholson Institute Museum, the Leisure Centre, Art Gallery and Library, housing and the hospital.
- Surrounding countryside and easy access to the Peak District National Park, Rudyard Lake, the Roaches, Caldon Canal, river Churnet, and Tittesworth Reservoir, as well as Brough Park within the town itself.

Problems and dislikes included:

- Poor traffic flows, congestion, inadequate pedestrian crossings, unsatisfactory car parking, poor bus services, safety concerns over the shared space by the Monument.
- Increasing number of empty shops, high business rates causing shop closures, the dated Smithfield Centre, the location of some markets outside Market Place, and the lack of a town vision.
- Poor condition of the public realm and bus station.
- The number of large empty buildings, including mill buildings.
- Lack facilities for younger people.

Further engagement was undertaken in Autumn 2024 to test the aims and main themes of the Plan, and responses to this were used to inform the detailed policy drafting. This included a market stall in the Totally Locally outdoor market.

In April 2025, further engagement was undertaken over two days. This tested various statements regarding Leek Town Centre, cultural heritage, services, transport, vacant buildings, and other matters. This included a market stall in the reopened indoor Butter Market. The feedback supported the themes in the Neighbourhood Plan, though a number of issues were raised that fell outside of the scope of planning policy.

2.3 Key Issues

Analysis of evidence and the outcomes of community engagement identified key planning issues for the Neighbourhood Plan to address. These include:

- Responding to climate change and the need to promote biodiversity;
- Town centre recovery and diversification, building on the strengths identified by the community and responding to the aftermath of COVID19;
- Creating more sustainable live/work patterns and travel;
- Creating local economic opportunities;
- The need for housing to meet local need, including affordable housing;
- Reuse vacant buildings, including historic mills;
- Realising the potential of the visitor economy;
- Encouraging younger people to live in the area.

These issues are addressed by the various policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

2.4 Strategy for Sustainable Development

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to promote sustainable development and growth by:

- Promoting Town Centre diversification and business growth;
- Supporting regeneration of key sites and buildings;
- Encouraging residential development, including in and around the Town Centre;

Sustainability is addressed in various ways:

- Protection of natural and built heritage and enhancing biodiversity;
- Requiring green and sustainable design;
- Promoting balanced transport provision and active travel.

2.5 Format of Policies

The policies are grouped in the following chapters:

Chapter 3	**Town Centre and Employment**
Chapter 4	**Residential Development**
Chapter 5	**Environment and Design**
Chapter 6	**Transport and Movement**

The structure of the policies is as follows:

Purpose (what the set of policies in the chapter seek to achieve)
Planning Rationale (concise summary of the thinking behind the policies).

Then for individual policies:

The policy (requirements for development proposals to meet)
Interpretation (notes on how the policy should be applied in decision making.

3. Town Centre and Employment

3.1 Purpose

To maintain or enhance the vitality and spirit of Leek as a historic market town, to meet the needs of local communities and visitors.

To create local economic opportunity and a strong local economy.

3.2 Rationale and Evidence

The National Planning Policy Framework August 2026 (NPPF) introduced national development management policies. **Chapter 7 Building a strong, effective economy:** deals with economy and long term economic growth, meeting business needs, and rural businesses. Potential barriers to investment should be identified. **Chapter 8 Ensuring the vitality of town centres:** includes Policies TC1 and TC2, which place emphasis on the vitality and viability of town centres. **Chapter 12 Making effective use of land:** relates to the effective use of land including underused sites, design and mixed use. **Chapter 16 Promoting healthy communities:** addresses community and recreational facilities.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes policy to support employment, local facilities and enhancement of Leek Town Centre, including identifying opportunity sites.

The **Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan** (adopted 9th September 2020) includes the following policies:

Policy SS 1 Development Principles
Policy SS 5 Leek Area Strategy
Policy TCR 1 Development in the Town Centres
Policy TCR 2 Primary Shopping Frontages
Policy E 1 New Employment Development
Policy E 2 Employment Areas
Policy E 3 Existing Employment Areas, Premises and Allocations
Policy E 4 Tourism and Cultural Development

These are augmented by the **Leek Town Centre Masterplan** SPD (adopted 26th March 2014)

There is also a **Leek Conservation Area Appraisal** (adopted September 2017).

These have informed the Town Centre and employment policies of the Neighbourhood Plan, with an emphasis on general conformity.

Leek Town Centre is highly valued for its unique character deriving from the good range of independent shops, cafes, restaurants and public houses, the historic market, its accessibility and welcoming atmosphere.

Leek Town Centre has been impacted by COVID19 and there are some shop vacancies. However, it retains a strong and distinctive offer to local people and visitors, with a range of

retail, hospitality, community, arts and cultural facilities. This is partly due to the range of independent local businesses, supported by the Totally Locally initiative which seeks to promote locally based business. There is also an indoor market and weekly street markets and a monthly artisan market.

The historic mill buildings and other historic buildings have proved to be challenging due to issues around viability, car parking and physical challenges around conversion. A flexible approach will be required to secure heritage-led regeneration. It is recognised that refurbishment of the Mill Buildings may require involvement of a community or other third sector organisation with capacity to raise capital funds.

Recent changes to live/work patterns have highlighted the need for high-speed broadband in workplaces and homes.

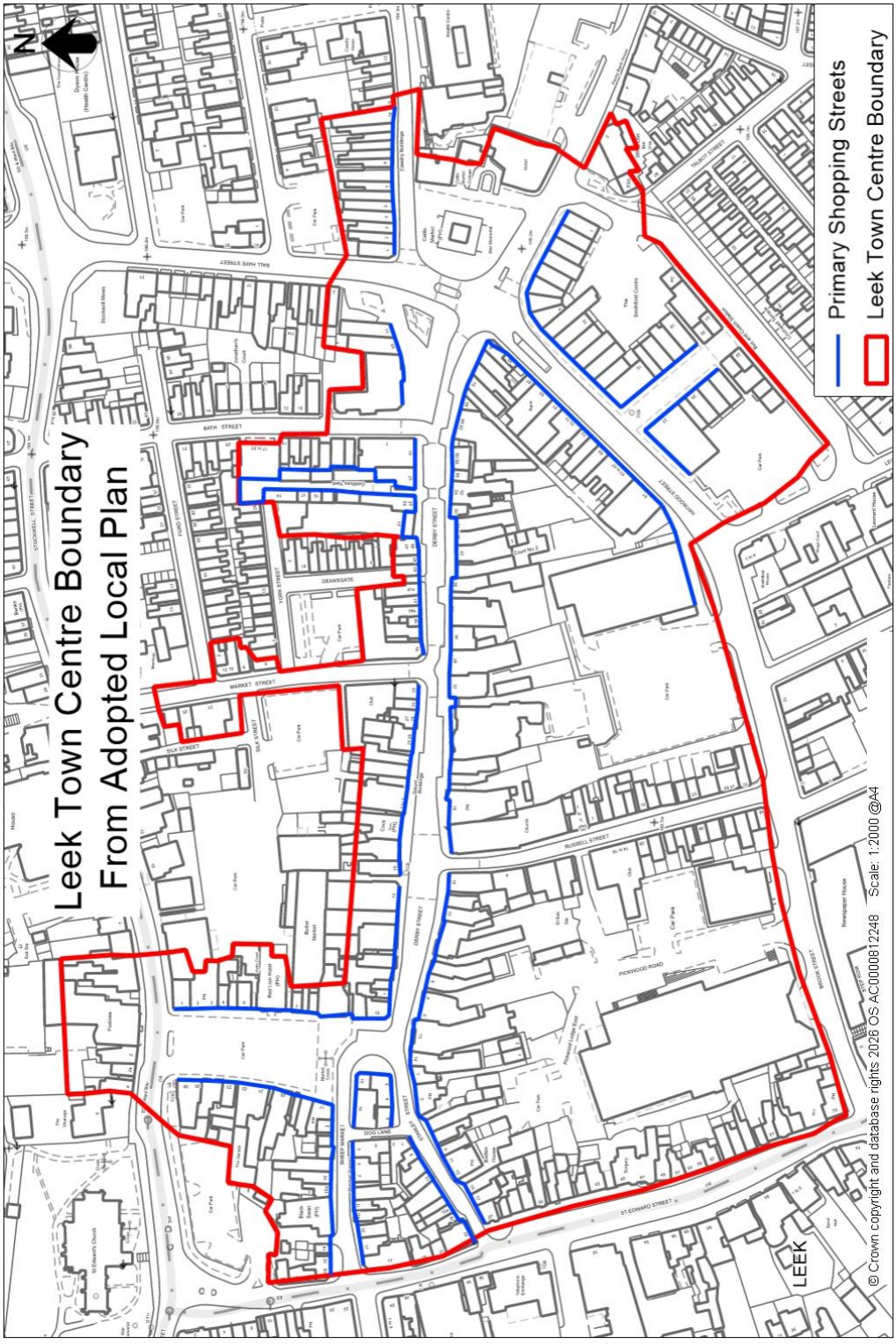
The High Street Task Force has a range of evidence and guidance on its web site, and this includes identification of 25 priorities in town centre recovery. Of most relevance to planning policy are:

- Area development strategies;
- Improving image;
- Visual appearance;
- Attractions, entertainment, non-retail offer, leisure offer;
- Walkability, connectivity;
- Recreational areas, public space, open space;
- Mixed use;
- Planning blight, regeneration;
- The role of the centre.

The Neighbourhood Plan is an area development strategy (policies for development). The other priorities have informed this and later policies of the Neighbourhood Plan, which seek to promote local economic opportunity and the growth and diversification of Leek Town Centre. There is a specific policy on heritage-led regeneration.

There are proposals for a ‘Foxlowe Cultural Corridor’, based on the Foxlowe Arts Centre, the Nicholson and other arts and cultural facilities. This would be supported by the following town centre and heritage policies.

Map 3: Leek Town Centre Boundary



Policy TCE1: Leek Town Centre, Employment and Facilities

1. **Development will be supported within Leek Town Centre Boundary (shown on 3), where:**

    a. **it would complement or enhance the attractiveness, vitality and viability of the Town Centre as a facility for the local community and for visitors;**
    b. **there would be no significant adverse impact on the amenities of the Town Centre, nearby businesses, community facilities or residential accommodation, by reason of noise, disturbance, odour, vibration or other impacts;**
    c. **any ground floor frontage units would, where possible, include uses open to the public and any existing shopfronts would be retained or enhanced.**

2. **Business and employment (Use Class E) development will be supported in the following locations, subject to there being no significant adverse impact on the amenities of residential properties by reason of noise, disturbance, odour, vibration or other impacts:**

    a. **within Leek Town Centre;**
    b. **brownfield sites within existing built settlements;**
    c. **enhancement or redevelopment of existing employment sites;**
    d. **sensitive refurbishment and reuse of historic buildings.**

3. **Where Use Class E development is allowed outside of the Town Centre, any planning permission should be restricted to prevent changes to retail or other uses, where such uses could harm the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.**

4. **The loss of existing employment space or community facilities will only be supported where:**

    a. **similar or better provision is made nearby; or**
    b. **the employment space or community facility is no longer needed or viable.**

Interpretation

Uses to support the attractiveness, vitality and viability of the Town Centre could include retail, food and drink and other uses in Use Class E and some uses in Use Classes F1 and F2. They would also include uses to diversify the offer, including performance venues, arts and culture, community facilities and other Town Centre uses. The NPPF describes community facilities as including meeting places, public houses, places of worship, cultural venues, youth centres, allotments, cemeteries and burial grounds, and facilities for play, sport and informal recreation.

There is a concentration of arts and cultural facilities based around the Foxlowe Arts Centre, the Nicholson Institute and St Edwards Church. Policy TCE1 would support arts and cultural uses that would complement and expand the local arts and culture offer.

The policy also sets out sustainable locations for employment development outside of the Town centre.

Design, environmental impacts and other requirements for employment development are set out in other policies of this Neighbourhood Plan.

In Leek Town Centre and other historic settings, special heritage duties apply with regard to the need to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas and the setting of listed buildings.

The suggested restriction of Use Class E development could involve precluding retail uses for larger sites outside of the Town Centre. The Local Plan specifies 200m^2 of floorspace as a threshold.

Policy TCE2: Town Centre Redevelopment Opportunities

1. **Within Leek Town Centre, the following sites (see 4) provide opportunities for remodelling or redevelopment, and schemes will be supported where they meet the requirements of Policy TCE1:**

    a. **The Smithfield Centre and Bus Station;**
    b. **Pickwood Road Shopping Centre.**

2. **Redevelopment or remodelling of the Smithfield Centre should take account of the following guidelines:**

    a. **Redevelopment or remodelling may provide opportunities for additional floorspace, providing the scheme is of very high quality, taking account of the scale of the surrounding context, meeting the design and other requirements of this Plan;**

    b. **Suitable uses are retention of town centre uses open to the public at ground floor level and shared workspace or residential development in upper floors;**

    c. **Opportunities should be taken to improve the environment and facilities of the bus station.**

3. **Redevelopment or remodelling of the Pickwood Road Shopping Centre should take account of the following guidelines:**

    a. **Redevelopment or remodelling should include improvement of the road frontages, including provision of windows to provide active frontages;**

    b. **Suitable uses are town centre uses, shared workspace or residential development;**

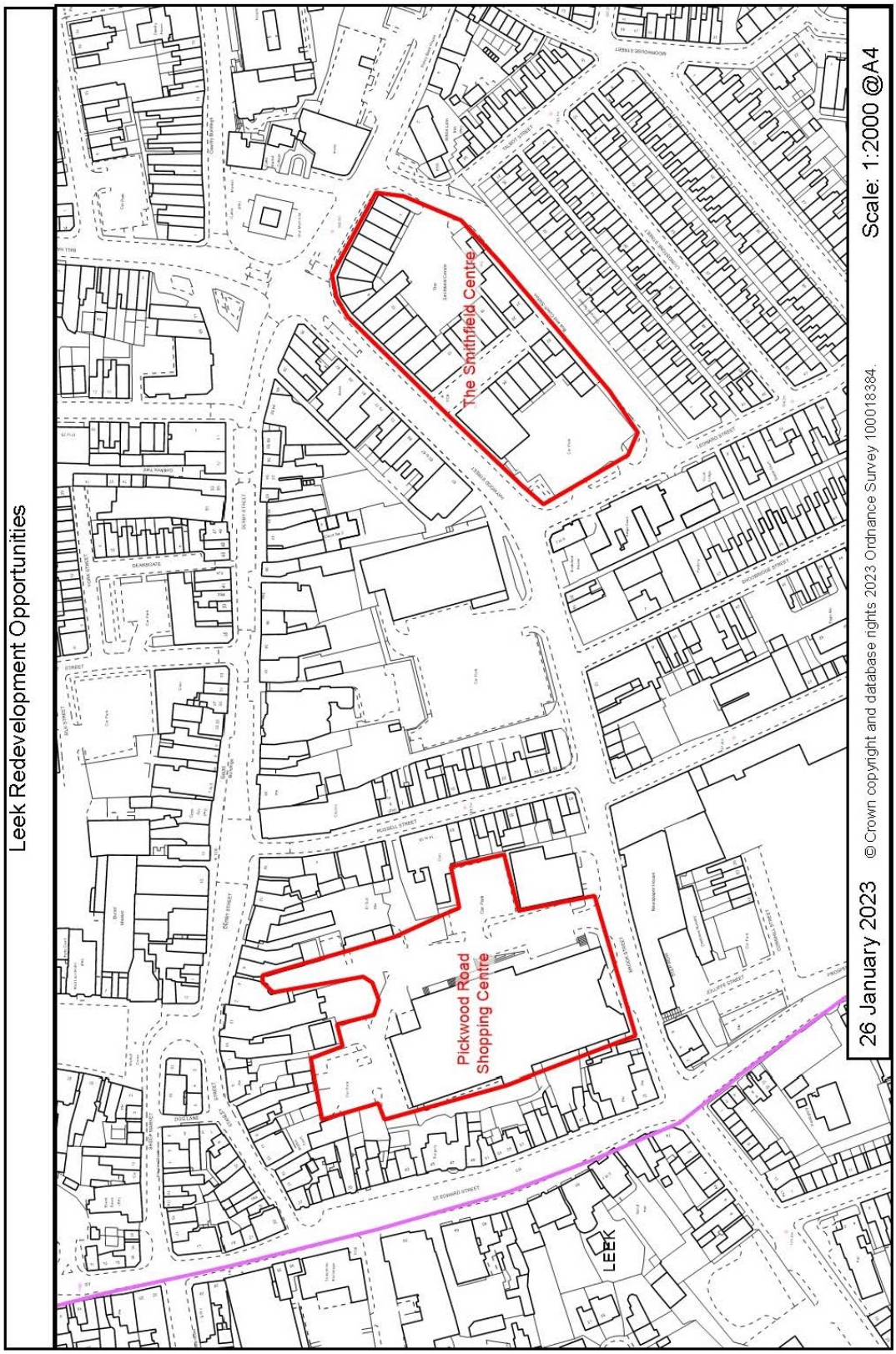
    c. **Opportunities should be taken to improve pedestrian access for all users, taking account of the topography of the site.**

Interpretation

The policy supports redevelopment or remodelling of sites which currently detract from the attractiveness of the Town and the character and setting of historic assets. Such development can provide economic benefit to the Town, whilst also enhancing the built and historic environments.

Both sites are adjacent to the Leek Conservation Area, and affect the setting of several listed buildings. Schemes should reflect the best of 21st Century design, in response. The policy may be useful in applying special heritage duties, including the need to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas and listed buildings and their settings. Design, environmental impacts and other requirements for development are contained in other policies of this Neighbourhood Plan. This would include Policies DCE2 and DCE3.

Map 4: Town Centre Redevelopment Opportunity Sites



Policy TCE3: Heritage-Led Regeneration

1. **Heritage-led regeneration will be supported through :**

    a. **the sensitive refurbishment and reuse of listed buildings or unlisted buildings in the Leek Conservation Area, where the scheme would preserve or enhance the listed building or its setting and the character or appearance of the Conservation Area;**
    b. **the sensitive refurbishment or reuse of local heritage assets, in a manner appropriate to their significance;**
    c. **reinstatement of historic buildings to a more original state, to enhance their significance, including reversal of harmful alterations and reinstatement of missing architectural features;**
    d. **the remodelling or redevelopment of buildings or sites that harm the character or appearance of conservation areas or the setting of listed buildings.**

2. **The sensitive refurbishment and reuse of historic mill buildings (See Map 5) will be supported for the following uses:**

    a. **residential accommodation;**
    b. **workspace, including offices and co-working space;**
    c. **arts and cultural uses;**
    d. **ancillary car and cycle parking at the lower levels of the building.**

3. **Where there are viability challenges in converting historic buildings, consideration should be given to the flexible application of parking requirements, based on a green travel plan to support walking and cycling.**

Interpretation

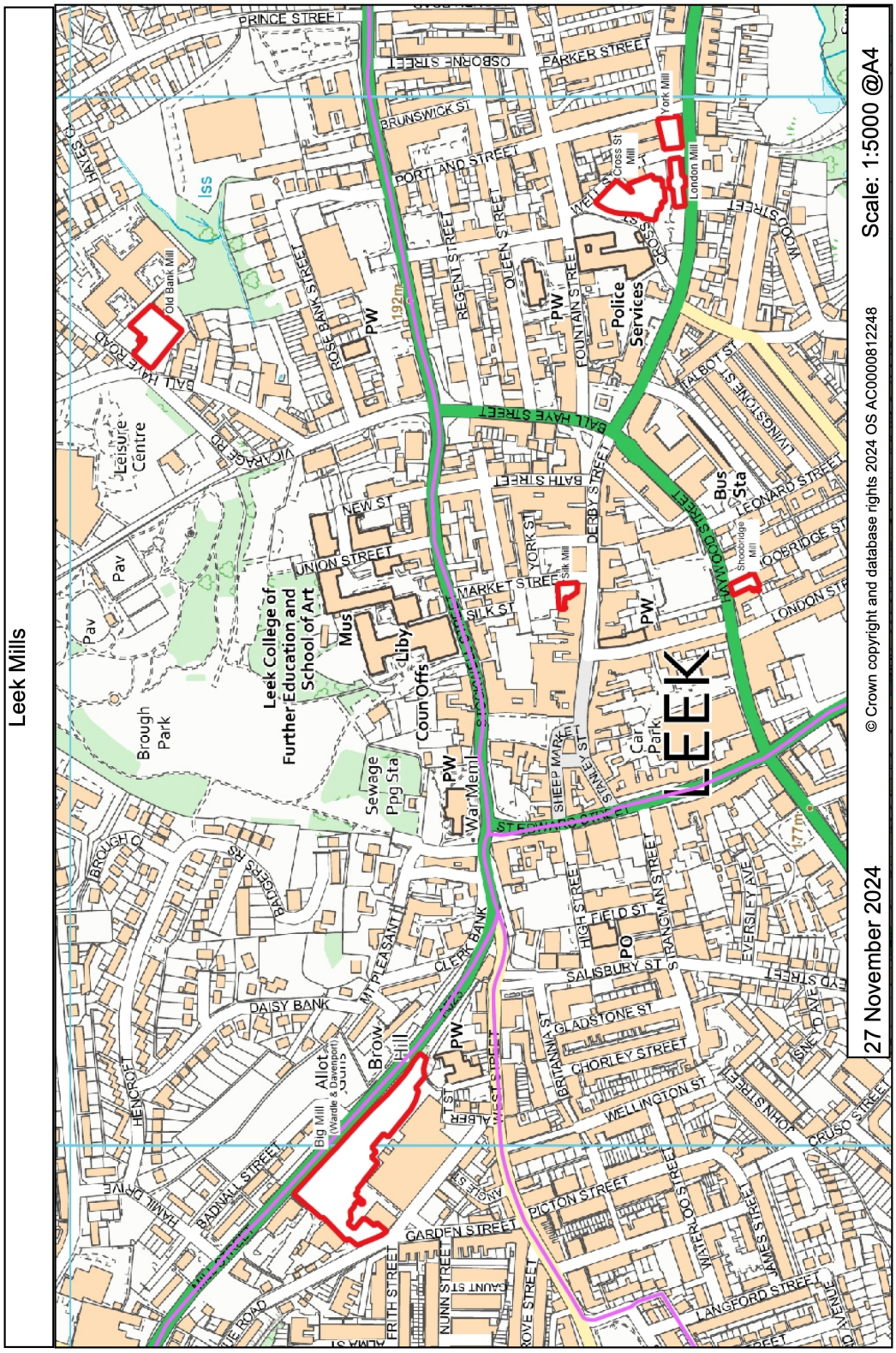
The policy seeks to enable refurbishment and reuse of historic buildings, including the historic mill buildings, recognising viability and other challenges in securing sustainable reuse. Historic buildings include listed buildings, buildings in conservation areas and non-designated heritage buildings. National policy states that heritage assets 'should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations', so this should be taken into account in applying this policy and later policies relating to heritage.

In identifying 'buildings or sites that harm the character or appearance of conservation areas or the setting of listed buildings', current or future conservation area character appraisals should be taken into account, in addition to the buildings and sites mentioned in Policy TCE2.

The main building of the Big Mill was destroyed by Fire in 2026. However, some structures have survived.

Leek's listed buildings may be identified on the 'National Heritage List for England'.

Map 5: Historic Mills





4. Residential Development

4.1 Purpose

To encourage a mix of high-quality residential accommodation, to meet diverse local needs.

4.2 Rationale and Evidence

Chapter 6 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes of the NPPF August 2026 deals with housing need, providing land, and affordable and specialist accommodation.

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies opportunity sites in and around the Town Centre, and identifies opportunities and locations for housing growth in existing built areas.

The **Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan** (adopted 9th September 2020) includes the following policies:

Policy SS 1 Development Principles
Policy SS 4 Strategic Housing and Employment Land Supply
Policy SS 5 Leek Area Strategy
Policy SS 9 Smaller Villages Area Strategy
Policy H 1 New Housing Development

These are augmented by Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), including:

Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD (adopted 21 February 2018)
Leek Town Centre Masterplan SPD (adopted 26th March 2014)
Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD (adopted March 2014)
Housing for Local People and Affordable Housing SPG (adopted February 2005)
Space about Dwellings SPG (adopted September 1998)

The following policies also address specific housing needs, standards and the way in which affordable housing is provided. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to modify the proportion or thresholds for affordable housing.

Policy RES1 highlights sustainable locations and opportunities for housing growth, where the Neighbourhood Plan supports development. This does not limit other opportunities for growth enabled by the Local Plan, for example through site allocations or policy on exception housing. The Neighbourhood Plan would support additional housing in sustainable locations, including within the Town Centre.

House prices are relatively affordable in North Staffordshire compared to the national average, though with variations across the area. The Neighbourhood Area includes a broad range of residential accommodation, including traditional terraces, suburban housing estates and converted industrial buildings.

Population of Town Centres has been a technique for promoting more sustainable live/work patterns and also supporting town centre regeneration, so is built into the policy.

A barrier for some people in gaining access to housing is the need for local economic opportunities. The following policies highlight the importance of affordable housing being provided locally, so as to meet local need.

The COVID period has highlighted the importance of high-quality housing, with sufficient amenity space.

The adopted Local Plan identifies a housing need for Leek of 945 (to 2030). This is addressed as follows:

Site allocations - 614
Large windfall - 165
Small sites - 110

The following table shows housing competitions to 2024/25.

Housing Completions

Year	Leek	Biddulph	Cheadle	Rural	District Total
2014/15	149	60	31	38	278
2015/16	29	28	10	32	99
2016/17	44	40	4	40	128
2017/18	40	33	13	56	142
2018/19	14	6	87	58	165
2019/20	85	18	22	78	203
2020/21	79	15	41	66	201
2021/22	29	11	57	80	177
2022/23	23	4	128	87	242
2023/24	19	20	95	98	232
2024/25	7	13	124	192	336
Total	518	248	612	825	2,203
Local Plan Target (%)	**30%**	**20%**	**25%**	**25%**	**100%**
Percentage % (to date)	23.5%	11.3%	27.8%	37.4%	100%

Table 6.1 Housing completions (net) each year (2014-2025)

This Neighbourhood Plan enables additional residential accommodation by supporting development of brownfield and infill sites, redevelopment of two opportunity sites within the Town Centre, and conversion of heritage assets, including large vacant mill buildings.

Policy RES1: Residential Development

1. **In addition to the defined development boundaries and housing sites allocated in the Local Plan, residential development will be positively supported in the following locations:**

    a. **conversion of upper floors of commercial properties within Leek Town Centre, providing it does not conflict with existing commercial uses;**
    b. **development of brownfield sites or building conversions within the defined Development Boundaries, including the opportunity sites identified in Policy TCE2;**
    c. **redevelopment of existing housing, providing there is no loss of heritage assets;**
    d. **sensitive refurbishment and reuse of historic buildings, including those identified in Policy TCE3;**
    e. **infill development of street-frontage gaps between existing housing built-frontages or garden development, meeting the requirements of Part 2 of this policy.**

2. **Infill development or garden development will be supported where:**

    a. **There would be no significant adverse impact on the amenities of existing residential properties;**
    b. **the scheme would provide adequate garden space for both new and existing dwellings, having regard to the pattern of gardens in surrounding properties.**

3. **Development should not harm the open landscape separation or create coalescence between Leek Town, Ladderedge and Leekbrook, or create ribbon development along Cheddleton Road or Newcastle Road.**

4. **The mix of residential accommodation should be based on the latest evidence of local need for the Parish, where available, including a range of sizes of accommodation for families, older people, people with disabilities, and first-time buyers.**

5. **Residential development should include positive design features to reduce carbon use and support biodiversity, meeting the requirements of Policies DCE1 and DCE2.**

6. **Residential development should be supported, where possible, by outdoor amenity space in the form of one or more of the following:**

    a. **private gardens, having regard to the pattern of gardens in surrounding properties;**
    b. **shared amenity space;**
    c. **external balconies or terraces.**

7. **All new dwellings, including new build and conversions, should have, where possible and appropriate:**

    a. **screened storage space for refuse and recycling bins;**
    b. **secure and screened storage for cycles, scooters and mobility scooters, with electrical charging points.**

Interpretation

The policy sets out sustainable locations, where the Neighbourhood Plan positively supports residential development. Design, environmental impacts and other requirements for residential development are set out in other policies in this plan.

Conversions of properties to residential uses could result in conflict with existing commercial uses where it would be likely to result in complaints from new residential occupants, for example through noise and disturbance associated with the existing commercial uses. The intention is to avoid such conflicts. It is recognised that there are permitted development rights in some instances, which take no account of adverse impacts on existing businesses. It is not the intention of the policy to seek to restrict permitted development rights. It only applies where planning permission is required.

Evidence on housing need would normally relate to the wider local authority area, through census and other data relating specifically to Leek should also be taken into account, especially where the age profile differs to the wider district.

Parts of the parish have high levels of surface water flood risk and are in floods zones 2 and 3 (see Environment Agency mapping). Flood risk is dealt with in national policy and the Local Plan.

To be flexible for changing needs, including home working, housing could include generous room sizes and storage space.

Policy RES2: Affordable Housing

1. **Affordable housing provision, where required, should be:**

    a. **provided as an integral part of development where possible, rather than being provided remotely, so that it meets local need in Leek Parish;**
    b. **be of similar design and specification to market housing, so that it is tenure blind.**

Interpretation

The policy seeks to shape affordable housing, to best meet the needs of Leek's communities. The policy does not seek to modify Local Plan thresholds or proportions for affordable housing.

5. Environment and Design

5.1 Purpose

To create high quality, environmentally sustainable buildings and places.

To preserve or enhance Leek's heritage, including listed buildings, conservation areas and non-designated historic assets.

To protect, conserve and enhance Leek's natural environment and biodiversity.

5.2 Rational and Evidence

Chapter 5 Meeting the challenge of climate change: is wider in scope than previous NPPFs, referring to limiting the need for travel, active travel, design, habitats, flood risk, sustainable drainage, green infrastructure, and other matters. **Chapter 14 Achieving well-designed places:** addresses design, with key principles of liveability, climate, nature, movement, built form, public space, and identity. **Chapter 16 Promoting healthy communities:** addresses community and recreational facilities. **Chapter 19 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment:** deals with protection of the natural environment, including enhancement, trees, protected landscapes, the coast and biodiversity and geodiversity. **Chapter 20 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment:** addresses the historic environment, including emphasis on the social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring and Policies on different kinds of heritage asset. The Neighbourhood Plan includes various policies dealing with the green, natural and historic environments, and design. This includes the earlier policies addressing heritage-led regeneration.

The **National Design Guide** (2021) establishes that well-designed places have ten characteristics. These are context, nature, identity, use, resources, movement, built form, public space, homes and buildings and lifespan. A draft replacement National Design Guide was subject to consultation early in 2026 and has also been taken into account.

The **Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan** (adopted 9th September 2020) includes the following policies:

Policy SS 1 Development Principles
Policy SS 5 Leek Area Strategy
Policy SD 1 Sustainable Use of Resources
Policy SD 2 Renewable/Low-Carbon Energy
Policy SD 3 Sustainability Measures in Development
Policy DC 1 Design Considerations
Policy DC 2 The Historic Environment
Policy DC 3 Landscape and Settlement Setting
Policy NE 1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
Policy NE 2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

These are augmented by Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Guidance (SPGs), including:

Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD (adopted 21 February 2018)
Leek Town Centre Masterplan SPD (adopted 26th March 2014)
Churnet Valley Masterplan SPD (adopted March 2014)
The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Heritage Register SPD (adopted February 2008)
Space about Dwellings SPG (adopted September 1998)
Leek Conservation Area Appraisal (adopted September 2017).

The historic and rural character of Leek is a community and environmental asset, but also an economic asset, helping to make the Town Centre competitive and supporting the visitor economy. Quality of place is a key factor in attracting investment and making Leek attractive as a place to live, work and visit.

Leek is surrounded by beautiful countryside and offers easy access to many attractions such as the Peak District National Park, Rudyard Lake, The Roaches, Caldon Canal, River Churnet and Tittersworth Reservoir, as well as Brough Park within the Town.

The neighbourhood area includes conservation areas and numerous listed buildings. These include the Leek Conservation Area and the Caldon Canal Conservation Area.

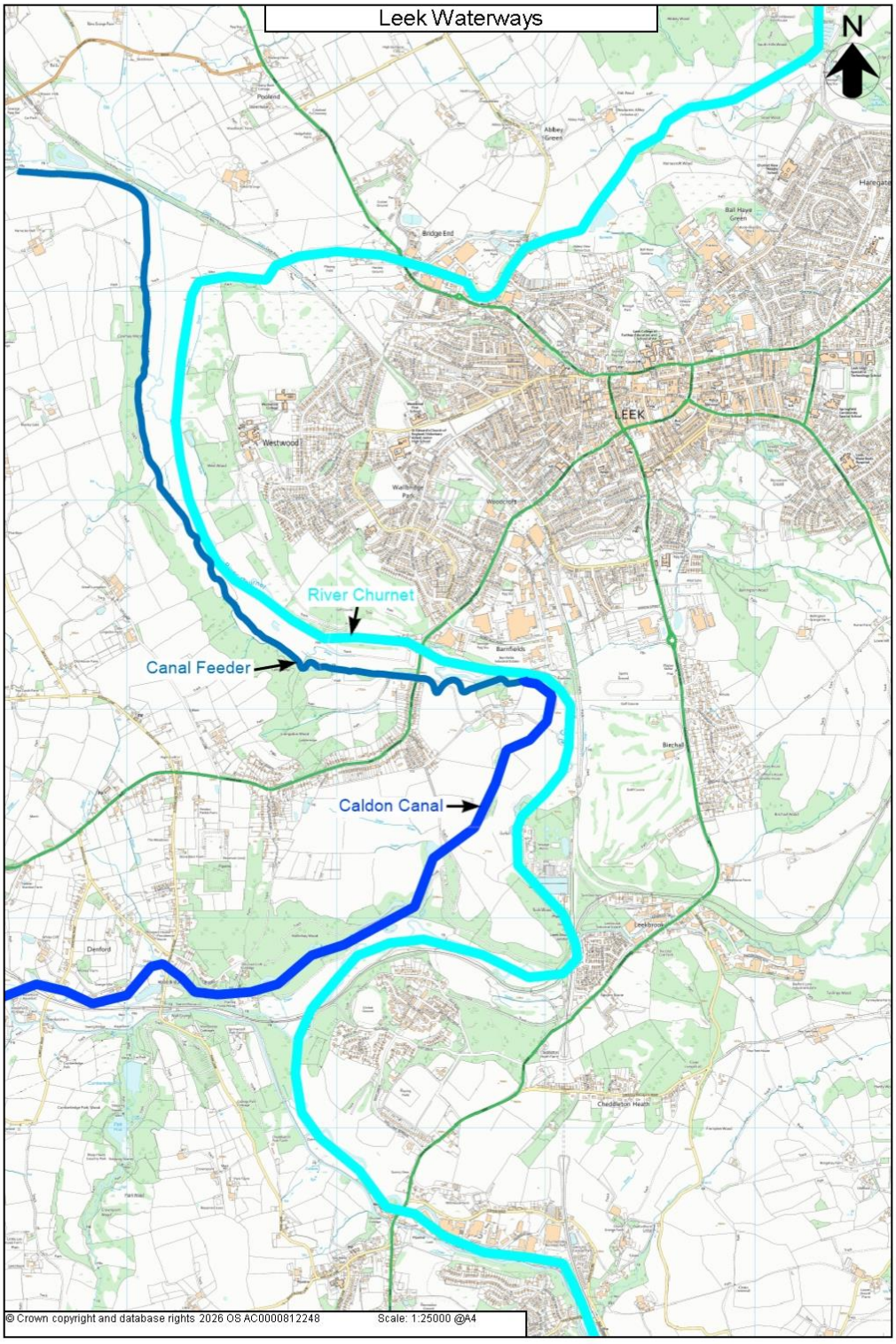
The Neighbourhood Area includes a range of green and blue infrastructure, which bring wide ranging benefits in terms of recreation, biodiversity, amenity and healthy lifestyles. These include parks, walking trails, sports facilities, recreation grounds, allotments and other green spaces and water features.

The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared against the context of increasing awareness of climate change. The following policies address various aspects of sustainable design and biodiversity, in addition to landscape and townscape character.

The Homes England **Building for a Healthy Life 2026** standard sets out various parameters for housing design and has informed the following policies and other policies in this Plan. The AECOM Town Centre Design Code has informed policies on design and character.

The following policies deal with the protection of the rural environment and green and blue infrastructure, general design requirements, and more specific character requirements and protection for the Leek and Caldon Canal Conservation Areas.

Map 6: Waterways in and around Leek



Policy DCE1: Rural Environment, Green & Blue Infrastructure

1. **Development should have no significant adverse impact and should take opportunities to enhance Leek's rural environment, including:**

    a. **conserving landscape character and habitats, including the landscape setting of the historic Town Centre;**
    b. **preserving or enhancing connectivity between the Parish's landscapes, green spaces, and network of paths and Public Rights of Way;**
    c. **taking account of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Nature Recovery Strategy.**

2. **Development should take opportunities where possible to achieve biodiversity net-gain in excess of statutory requirements.**

3. **Development should take opportunities to enhance and should have no significant adverse impacts on the character, accessibility, amenity and water quality of the River Churnet, the Caldon Canal and feeder, wells, springs and other watercourses and their landscape corridors and settings (see Map 6).**

4. **Development should retain existing trees, hedges, woodland and orchards or, where loss is unavoidable, should provide replacement trees or hedges within the site or nearby, using local native species or other species with high environmental value, to create a similar level of amenity.**

5. **Development should preserve or enhance the character of Kiln Lane and other historic, narrow rural lanes, including retention of tree canopies, hedgerows and raised sides and verges.**

6. **Development should enhance or have no significant adverse impact on the amenity, safety, or accessibility of community and recreational green spaces and trails, including:**

    a. **Brough Park and other parks;**
    b. **Ladderedge Country Park;**
    c. **The Rudyard Trail;**
    d. **woodland areas;**
    e. **play areas and recreation grounds;**
    f. **sports fields, pitches and golf courses;**
    g. **allotments and orchards;**
    h. **cemeteries;**
    i. **community green spaces.**

Interpretation

The policy would apply to all development affecting the rural environment, or green and blue spaces.

Impacts on the river, canal and other watercourses could include impacts on character, setting, accessibility, amenity, tranquillity, water quality or other impacts. Lighting could also be an issue, as

waterway corridors are often used by nocturnal species such as bats as foraging or commuting routes and therefore the illumination of water spaces is best avoided.

Particular care is required to consider impacts on designated sites, such as Nature Conservation Sites, Ancient Woodlands, Tree Preservation Orders, and ground sources water protection zones.

In considering habitat impacts, following hierarchy is useful:

- Avoid habitat damage;
- Minimise habitat damage;
- Restore damaged or lost habitat;
- Compensate for habitat loss or damage (as a last resort).

Biodiversity net gain requirements are now set out in national legalisation, policy and guidance. Trees play a crucial role in achieving BNG by providing habitats for wildlife, improving air quality, and contributing to climate resilience.

Opportunities for environmental enhancement could include:

- Restoring neglected hedgerow;
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on a site;
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape;
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds;
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings;
- Ensuring lighting is designed and managed to reduce impacts on wildlife;
- Adding a green or brown wall or roof to new buildings;
- Providing a new footpath through development to link into existing rights of way.

Incorporating existing landscape features, landform and green infrastructure into redevelopment is an important part of avoiding habitat damage. Trees and hedges are also addressed in Policy DCE2, in terms of the design and layout of development. Policy NE2 of the SMDC Local Plan also deals with trees and hedges.

Rural, historic (ancient) lanes include:

Beggars Lane
Pitcher Lane
Roebuck Lane
Pickwood Road
(alley)
Novi Lane
Moss Rose Lane
The Mount
Kiln Lane

Back Lane
Church Lane
Clerk Bank
Petite France
Silk Street
Deansgate
Brow Hill
The Gunnel
Dog Lane

Brunts Lane
Cartledge Lane
Ball Lane
Birchall Lane
Knivden Lane
High Up Lane
City Lane

In the application of Part 6 of the Policy, key green spaces include the following (see also Maps 7-11):

Parks
Ball Haye Green Park

Brough Park and Brough Park Fields Nature Reserve
Ladderedge country park and meadow land
Glebeville Park
Sainsbury SWT Park

Trails
Rudyard Trail
Churnet corridor and footpaths

Woodlands
Ballington Wood
Birchall (three wooded areas)
Woodland between Wettenhall and Hillside

Recreation Grounds
Haregate recreational ground
Ball Haye Green recreational area
Ashbourne Road recreational ground
West Street recreational ground
Westwood recreation ground
Pickwood recreation ground
Woodcroft recreation ground

Playing Fields
Birchall Playing Fields
Churnet Valley School
All Saints School
Westwood First School
St Edwards School
Westwood College
Leek High School
Woodcroft Academy
St Edwards Academy
Churnet View Middle School
All Saints C of E First School

Sports
Highfield Cricket Ground
Tennis Club
Leek Town FC
Leek Golf Club
Westwood Golf Club
Leek Hockey Club
Leek Archery Club

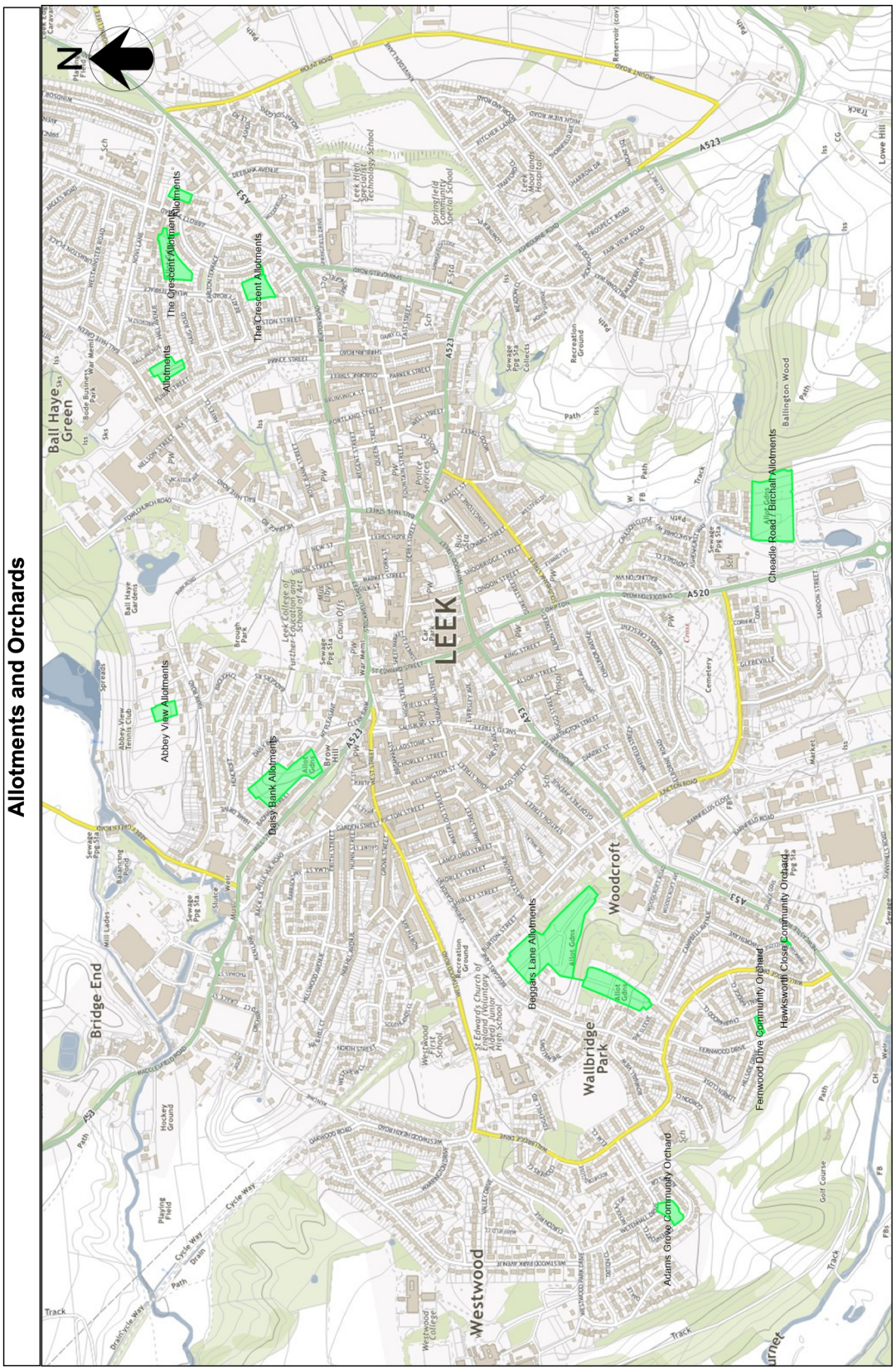
Allotments and Orchards
Hawksworth Close Community Orchard
Adams Grove Community Orchard
Fernwood Drive Community Orchard
Birchall Allotments
Beggars Lane Allotments
Daisy Bank Allotments

Cheadle Rd Allotments
Peggs Field Allotments
Parrs Field, Brow Hill and Badnall Street
Haregate - Crescent 1 & Crescent 2

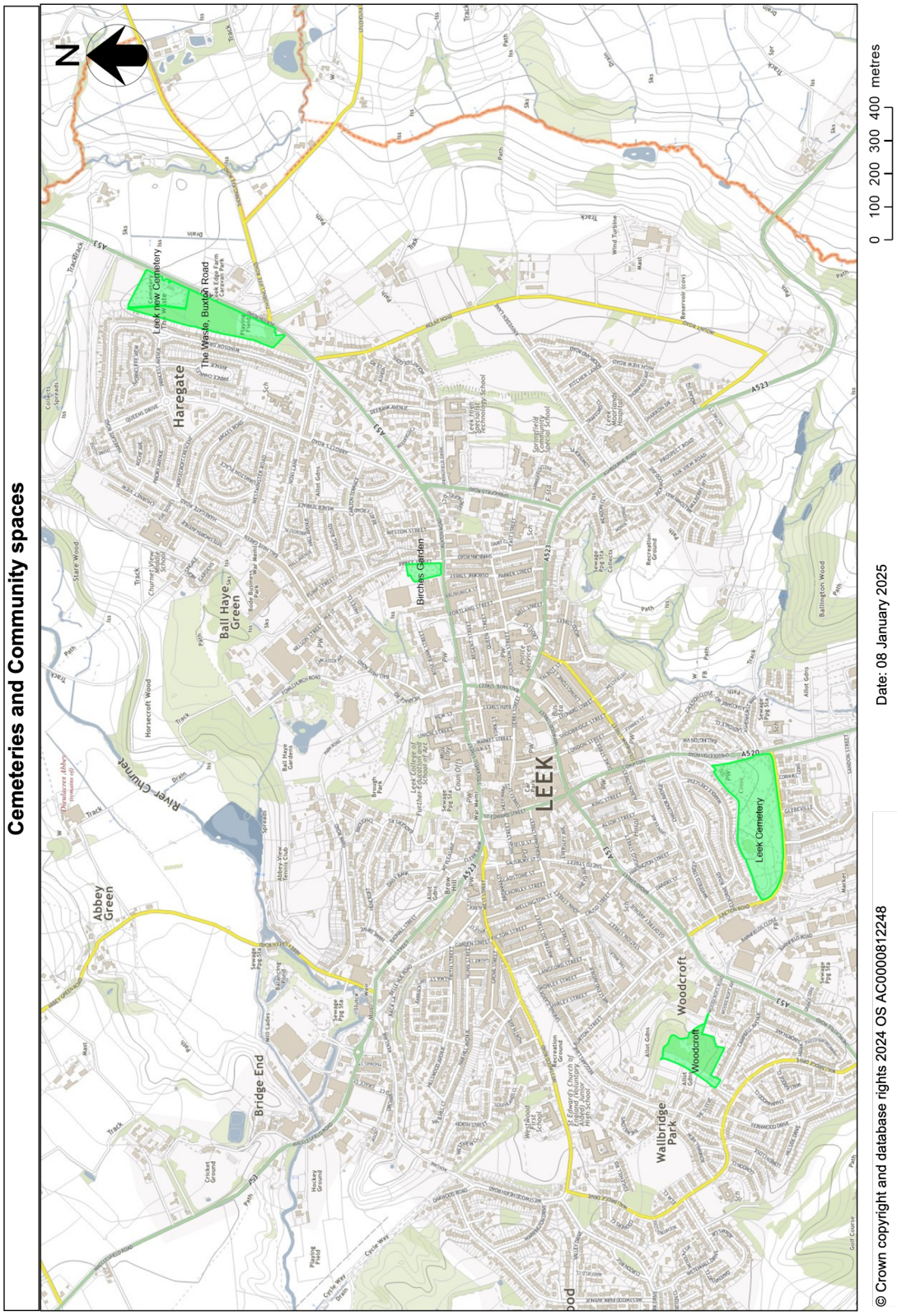
Cemeteries
Leek Cemetery
Leek New Cemetery

Community Green Spaces
The Waste, Buxton Road
Ladydale Village Green
Birches Garden
Ball Haye, Abbotsfield
Land between Crescent and Weston
Land between Novi Lane and Crescent
Land near Churnet View
Various green spaces in the Haregate Estate, including mature trees

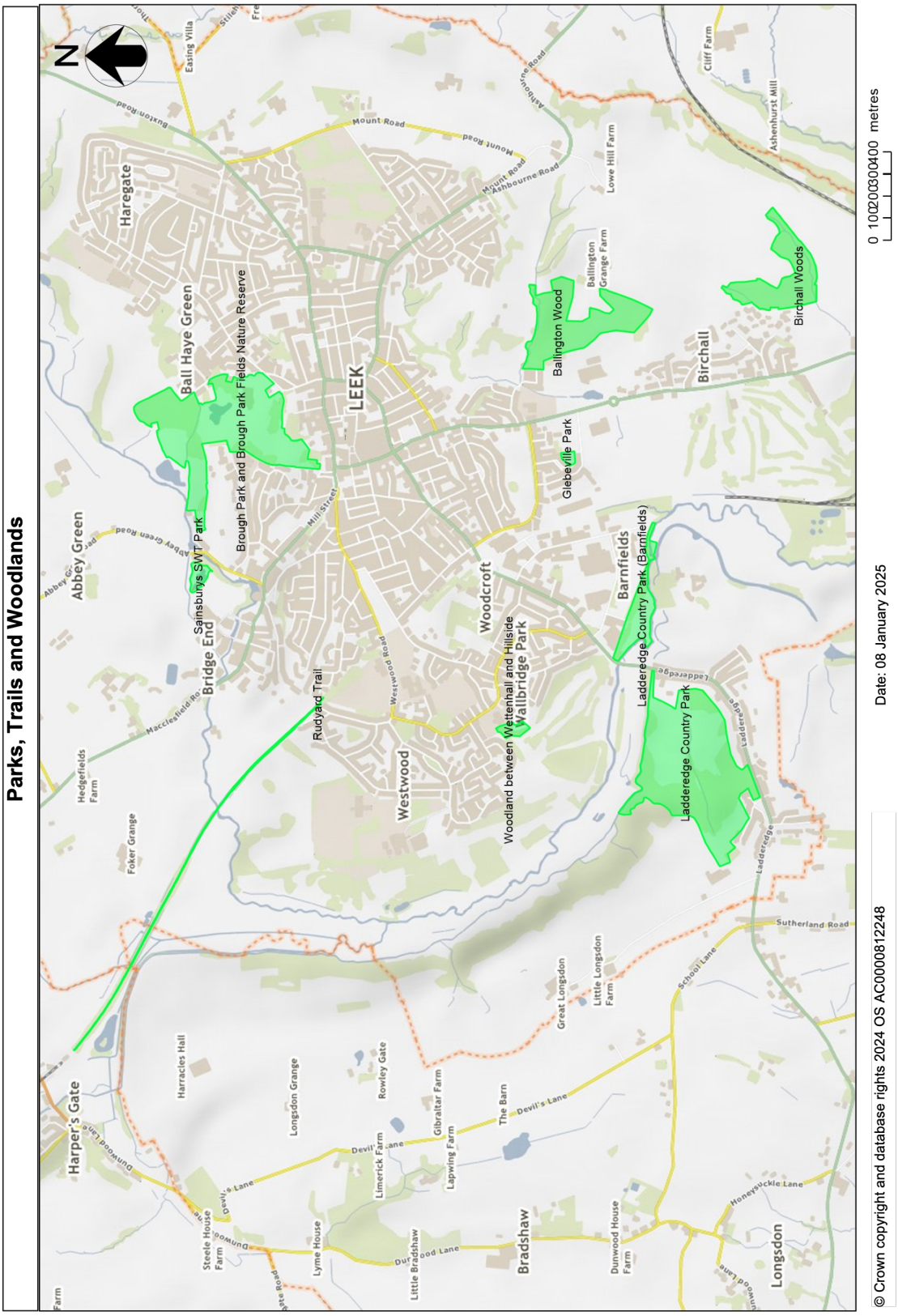
Map 7: Allotments and Orchards



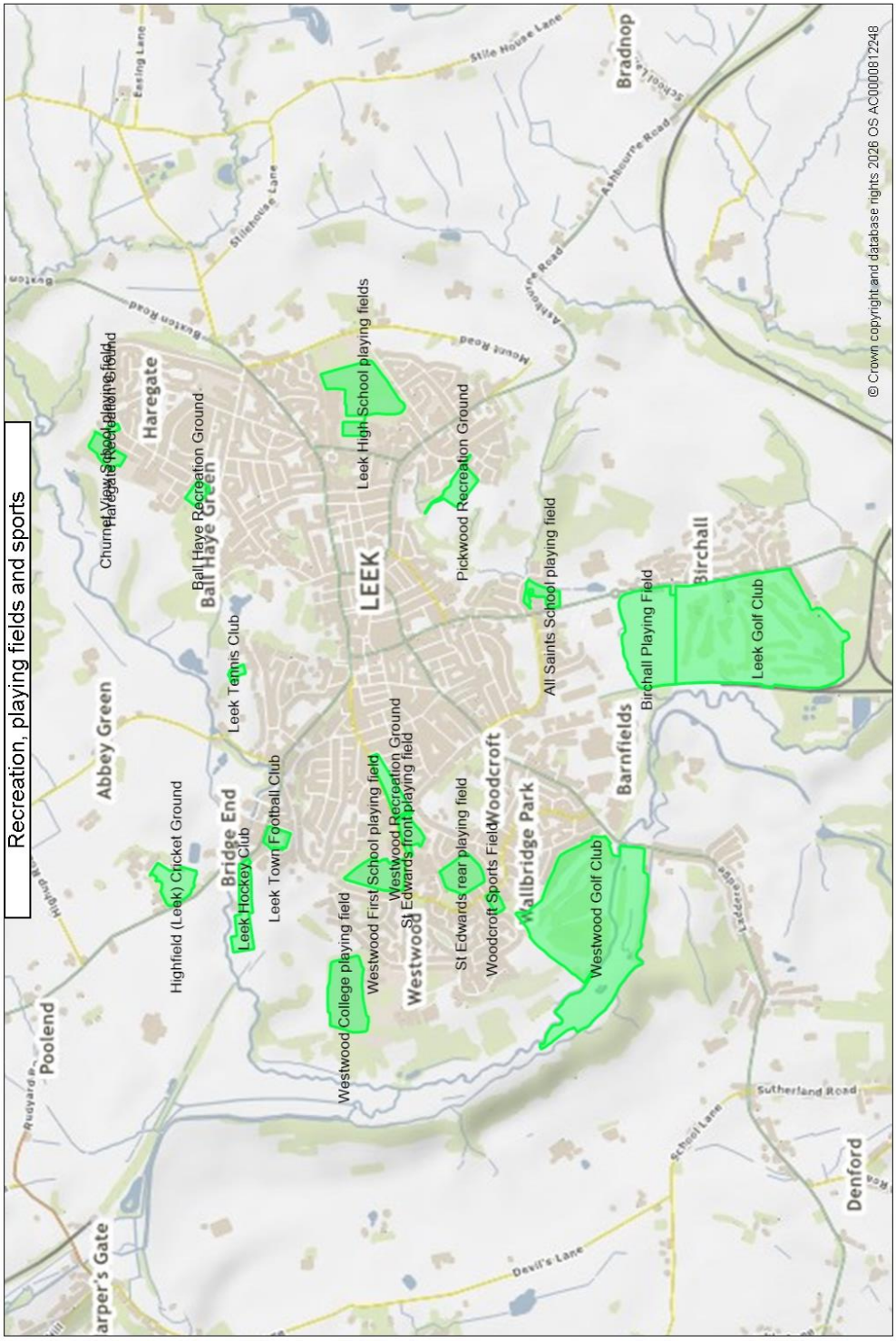
Map 8: Cemeteries and Community Spaces



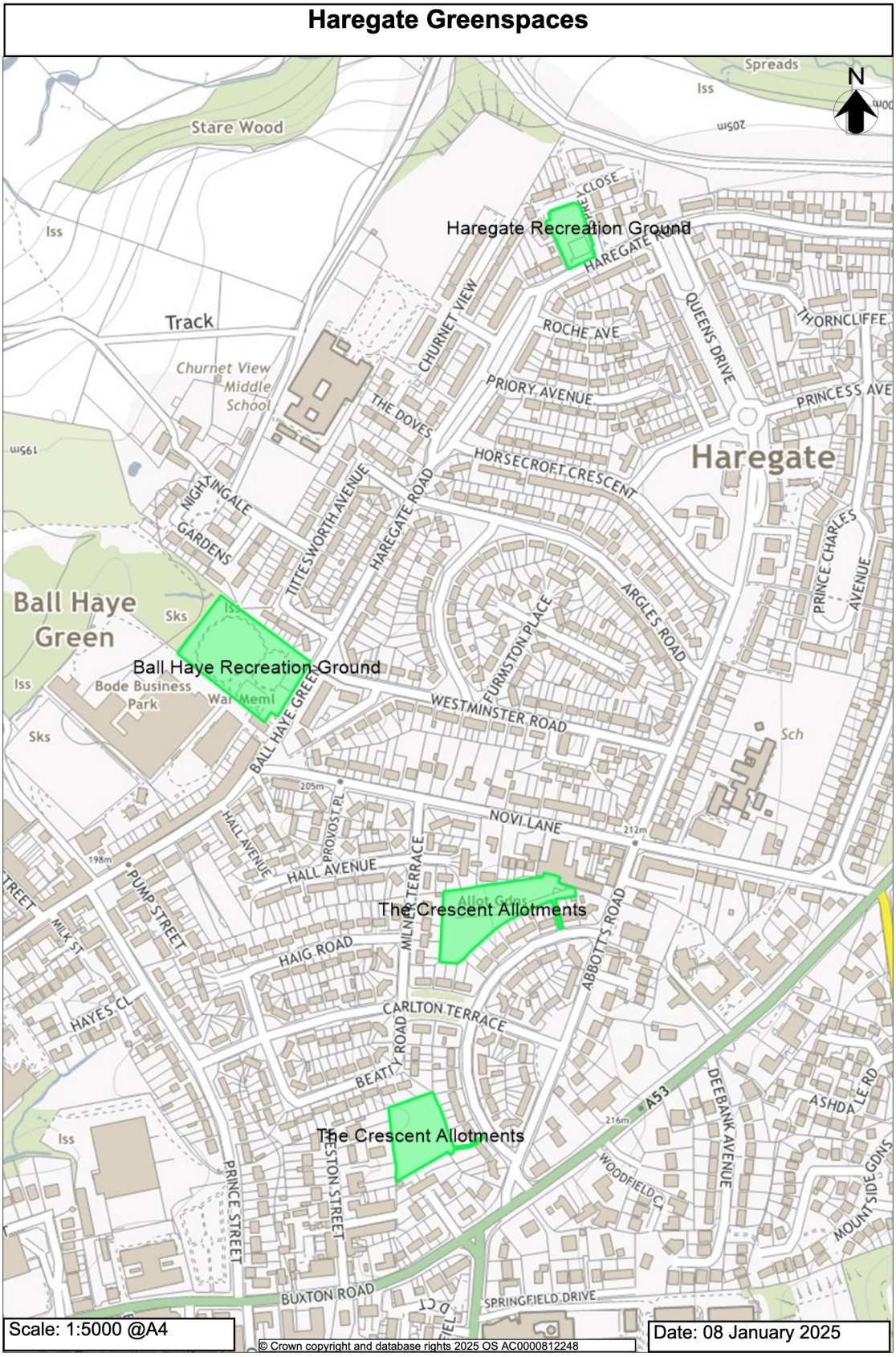
Map 9: Parks Trails and Woodlands



Map 10: Recreation, Playing Fields and Sports



Map 11: Haregate Green Spaces





Policy DCE2: Design

1. **Development should include positive design features and specifications to minimise carbon impacts.**

2. **Development should enhance Leek's locally distinctive character and complement the surrounding context in terms of:**

    a. **predominant height, scale and massing, taking account of the historic town centre and wider parish;**
    b. **townscape character, including set-back from the road and any patterns of gardens, yards or front courts;**
    c. **response to Leek Parish's distinctive topography;**
    d. **retaining trees, hedges, and historic walls and features and incorporating them into the design and layout of the scheme.**

3. **Landscape design should be an integral part of the design and layout of development and should complement Leek's rural character, including:**

    a. **taking opportunities to create attractive and climate resilient spaces and streets, including planting of trees and hedges;**
    b. **incorporating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), where necessary;**
    c. **providing landscaping and boundary treatments to create a soft transition between built development and the surrounding rural landscape.**

4. **Development should provide active frontages with windows overlooking streets and spaces where practicable, to provide natural surveillance.**

5. **The layout of development must give priority to pedestrian and cycle movement and create a high-quality environment for pedestrians and cyclists, including links to the Parish's surrounding paths, facilities and public transport.**

6. **Car parking should be integrated into the design and layout of development, so that streets and spaces are not car-dominated.**

7. **Building materials should have a good standard of finish and be durable to weathering and support will be given to the use of local or recycled materials, materials with low-embodied energy or materials from sustainable sources.**

8. **Creative or innovative design solutions with superior environmental performance, designed for the specific site and context, will be supported.**

Interpretation

To secure compliance with the policy, an integrated approach should be taken to the design of buildings, spaces and landscape, based on analysis of the site and context. In the conservation areas, the policy should be applied closely with Policies DCE3 and DECE4.

To comply with the policy, use of skilled design teams is encouraged. Careful evaluation of sites and their overall setting is required.

The policy does not encourage or require stylistic imitation, recognising that the local character is based on architectural diversity, based on a mix of local vernacular buildings and more formal architecture, sometimes based on national and international influences (for example, Classical architecture). High quality innovative green design is encouraged and is entirely appropriate in Leek's historic environments.

Local and historic materials include stone, red bricks, plain clay tiles, timber, stone flags, stone setts and ironwork. Examples of green materials could include materials with low embodied energy, timber from sustainable sources, bamboo, green or brown roofs or walls. Use of a mix of traditional materials with green materials could help to create a locally distinctive vernacular representing the current century.

Good design need not be elaborate or costly, but does involve choices. Simple design using good materials can often achieve better results within a given budget than adding unnecessary decorative features.

The Staffordshire Moorlands Design SPD and the National Design Guide may be useful in securing compliance with this policy.

A way of ensuring that cars do not dominate streets and spaces is to provide a varied provision of parking, including garages, curtilage spaces and limited street parking.

Green design features to reduce carbon use could include:

- use of efficient heating and cooling systems.
- superior insulation properties and airtightness;
- orientation to take account of climate;
- natural ventilation and air flow to help avoid over-heating in warmer weather;
- use of local, low-embodied energy, recycled and recyclable materials;
- living (green) walls or roofs as part of the design;
- rainwater capture, storage and reuse (grey water);
- inclusion of space for naturally drying clothes;
- flexible spaces and layouts to accommodate changing demands;
- sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) incorporated into the landscape design;
- use of traditional hedges for boundary treatments, to create a greener environment;
- Use of native or pollinator-friendly species for planting and landscaping;
- Establishment of pollination routes;
- Use of swift or bird bricks, bee-friendly features, hedgehog gaps, and other features to support wildlife.
- local green energy schemes such as ground heat pumps, photovoltaics, biomass and other technologies;
- Micro-generation, such as solar panels;
- reusing and retrofitting existing buildings to maintain the embodied energy used in their construction, also avoiding landfill.

Even very minor development can include green features, for example through the specification of materials from local and sustainable sources.

Policy DCE3: Leek Conservation Area

1. **Development in or around Leek Conservation Area (see Map 12) should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Leek as a historic market town, complementing the following key characteristics:**

    a. **The predominant two-three storey character in residential streets, with greater variation in commercial streets;**
    b. **The predominant materials, including red brick, plain clay tiles and some use of stone;**
    c. **Rear of pavement building frontages to the main shopping streets;**
    d. **Housing areas with rear of pavement frontages, or frontages set back behind shallow front courts;**
    e. **Architectural diversity, resulting from different period of construction, and including several distinctive buildings;**
    f. **Churches and their churchyard settings as key historic landmarks and spaces;**
    g. **Market Place, Sparrow Park and the Nicholson War Memorial as key civic spaces;**
    h. **The permeable environment for pedestrians, including pedestrian links through built frontages;**
    i. **Views towards key historic landmarks, including church towers;**
    j. **Surviving historic ground surfaces, including cobbled stone setts.**

2. **Historic shopfronts or surviving features from historic shopfronts should be retained and support will be given to the reinstatement of historic shopfronts, where they have been previously removed or altered.**

3. **New shopfronts should complement the character of the building in which they are being installed, and should:**

    a. **provide level access, where possible;**
    b. **have security measures integrated into the design, to minimise adverse visual impacts;**
    c. **include space for high quality signage as an integral part of the design.**

Interpretation

The policy highlights key characteristics of the area, to inform the design of new development, together with the other policies in this chapter. The policy may be helpful in applying the special statutory duty relating to conservation areas in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Leek Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2017) may be useful in complying with the Policy.

The conservation area is on the Heritage at Risk Register (as vulnerable). The policy may assist in addressing its vulnerability, by safeguarding historic buildings and features, fabric, townscape, spatial quality, public realm and other features.

Churches and churchyard settings include St Edwards Church, St Lukes Church, Friends Meeting House and St Mary's RC.

Stone setts are an important part of the character of the Leek Conservation Area, including the surfacing in Market Place.

Conservation area status should not be a barrier to creative or green design. The policy should not be interpreted as requiring stylistic imitation or a barrier to creativity. Indeed, the character is based partly on architectural diversity and development that uses imitation, or parody could harm the integrity and authenticity of the area.

Planning applications for shopfronts should include sectional plans, to show the profiles and details of the design. The following guidelines may be useful in securing compliance with the policy:

Elements: The main elements of a traditional shopfront are the fascia, door, windows, stallriser, pilasters and capitals. The fascia provides space for signage.

Materials: The stall riser should be of timber, metal or masonry construction. Window frames, doors, pilasters and facias should be of timber construction. Use of uPVC in shop fronts is at odds with traditional character of Leek Conservation Area.

Detail: To create a good standard of detail, timber panelling should be constructional, rather than adding timber beading to a flat surface.

Finishes: Paint finishes are more historically authentic than stained finishes.

Lighting: Projecting external lighting of the shop sign area provides a higher quality effect than internal lighting behind a transparent shop sign. This is especially important in heritage settings.

Shutters: Shutters should be avoided where possible, in favour of laminated or toughened glass and/or internal ‘open’ shutters. Any shutters or shutter boxes should be placed internally behind the shop window. Where external shutters are necessary, they should be integrated into the shopfront design, avoiding projecting shutter boxes, not blocking the shop window when in an open position, and should be perforated to allow vision to the interior beyond.

Canopies: Canopies should be retractable and of fabric and metal design.


GREYSTONES
Century House

Policy DCE4: Caldon Canal Conservation Area

1. **Development in or around the Caldon Canal Conservation Area (see Map 12) should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and its features, including:**

    a. **The historic and industrial heritage value, as a key transport route, influencing the historic development of Leek;**
    b. **The canal and feeder water channels, banks, towpaths, winding holes, edges and copings;**
    c. **Overflows, sluices and other structures associated with the operation of the canal;**
    d. **Bridge, aqueduct and tunnel structures;**
    e. **Hedgerows and mature trees;**
    f. **Views towards surrounding landscapes.**

2. **Development should not harm and take opportunities to enhance:**

    a. **the accessibility of the canal corridor for pedestrians and cyclists, including improved links to the Town Centre;**
    b. **facilities to support the recreational use of the canal.**

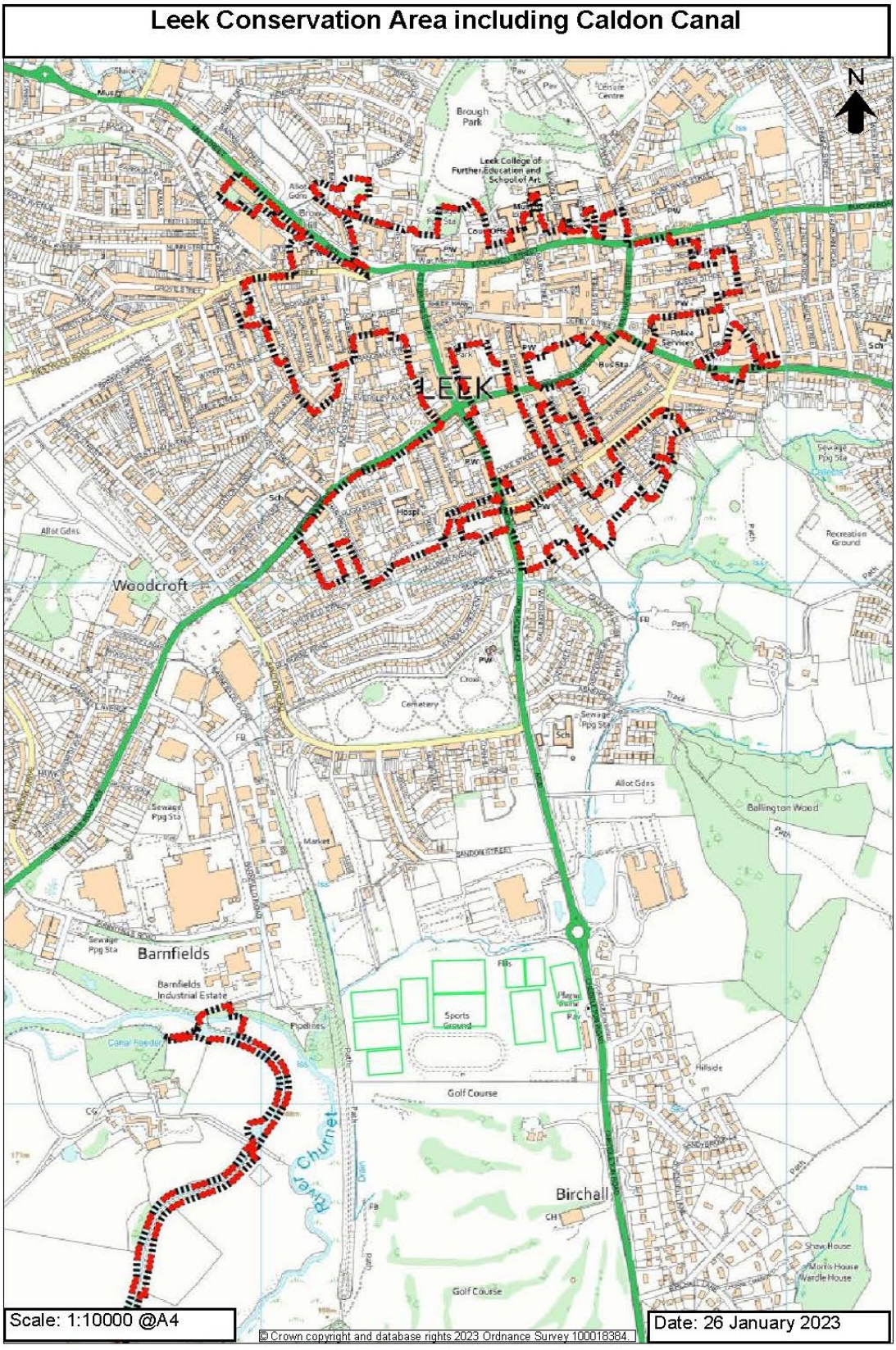
Interpretation

The policy highlights key characteristics of the Caldon Canal Conservation Area, to inform the design of new development, together with the other policies in this chapter. The policy may be helpful in applying the special statutory duty relating to conservation areas in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

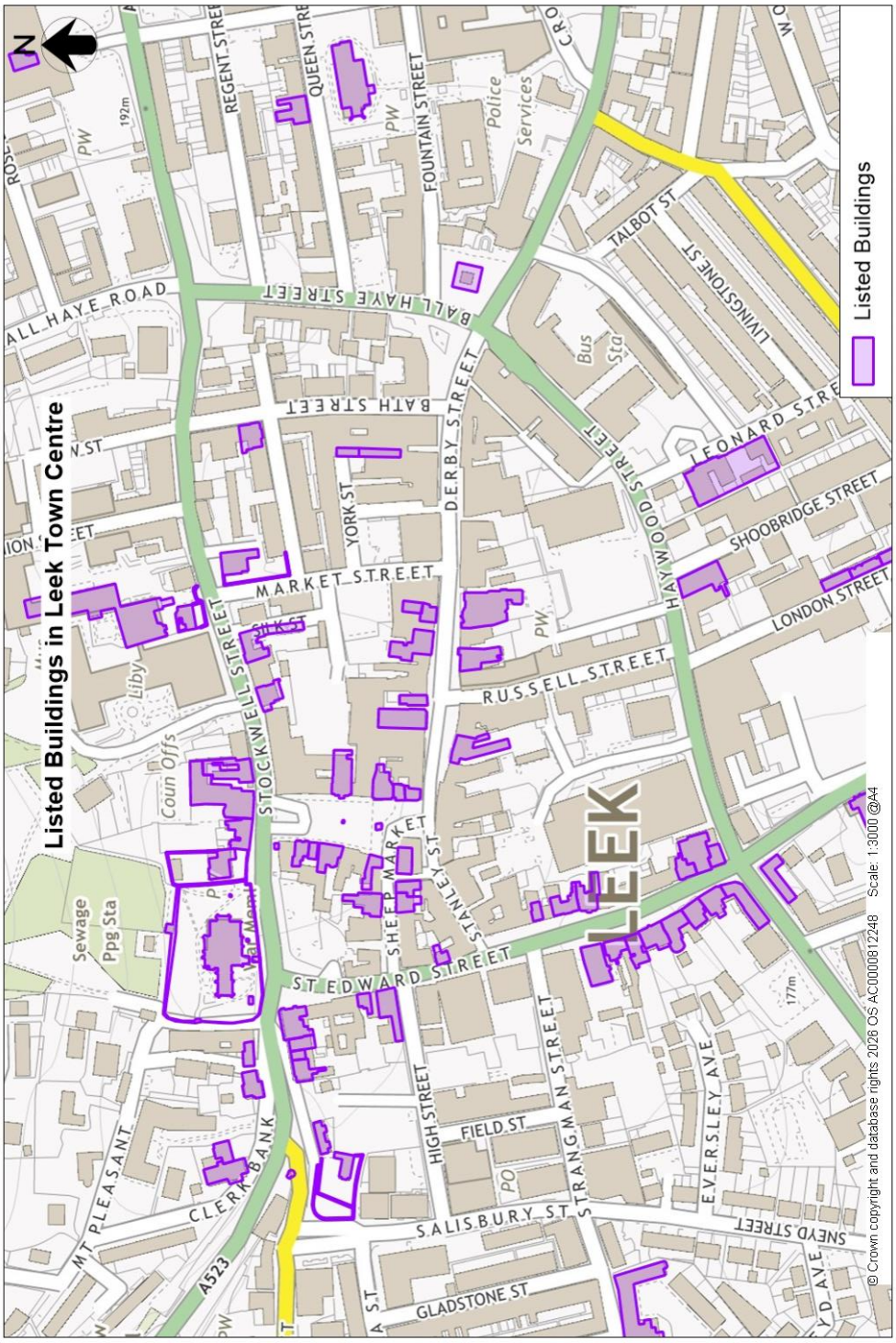
Conservation area status should not be a barrier to creative or green design. The policy should not be interpreted as requiring stylistic imitation or a barrier to creativity. Indeed, the character is based partly on engineering innovation and imitation, or parody can harm the integrity and authenticity of the area.

Policy DCE1 also includes requirements for the Caldon Canal and other water courses.

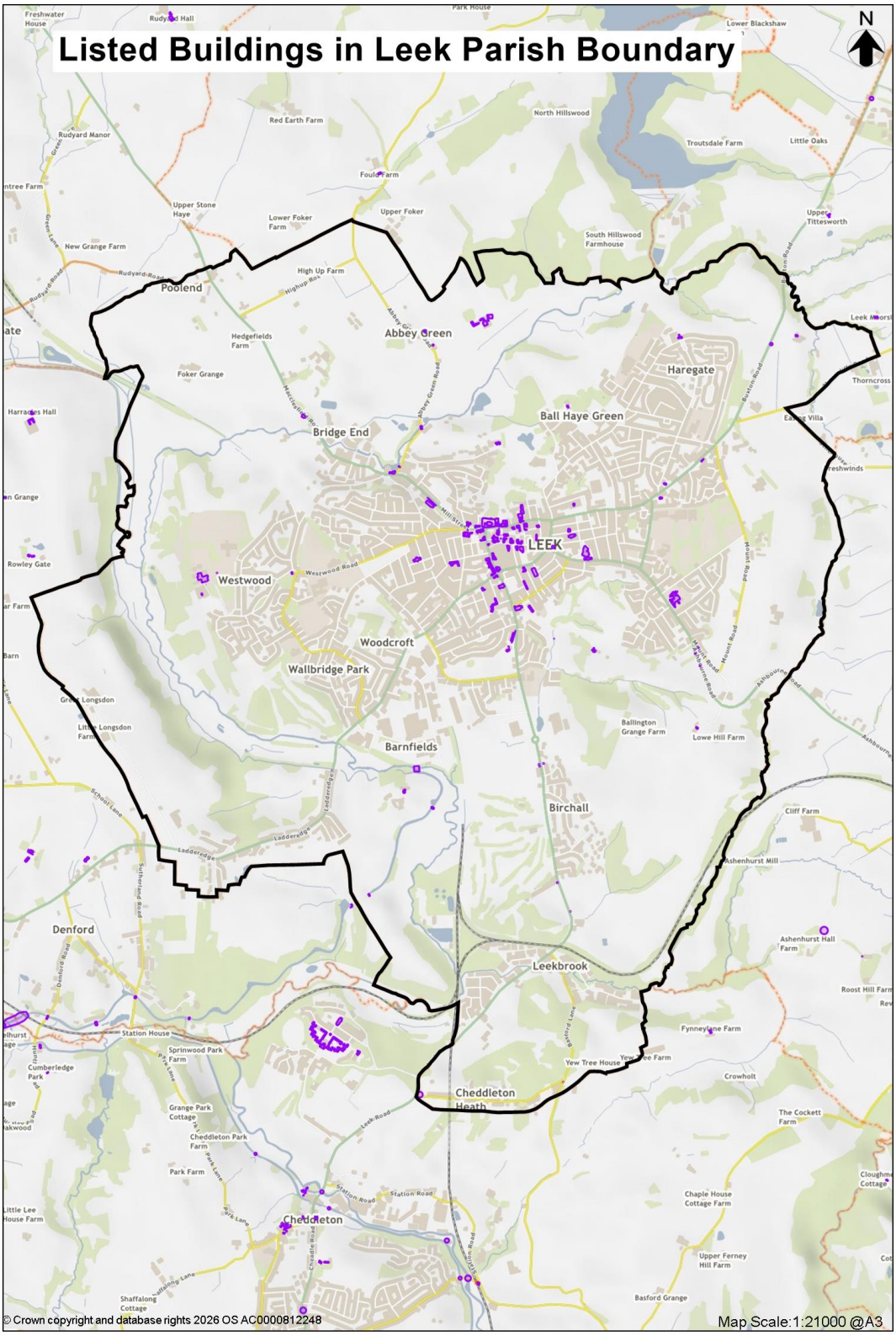
Map 12: Leek Town Centre and Caldon Canal Conservation Areas



Map 13: Listed Buildings in and around Leek Town Centre



Map 14: Listed Buildings in Leek Parish



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6. Transport and Active Travel

6.1 Purpose

To ensure balanced and sustainable transport provision in new development, including opportunities for active travel.

6.2 Rationale and Evidence

Chapter 15 Promoting sustainable transport of the NPPF August 2026 deals with parking, sustainable locations for development, impacts, and sustainable transport, including active travel. Active travel is very important in Leek Parish.

The **Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan** (adopted 9th September 2020) includes the following policies:

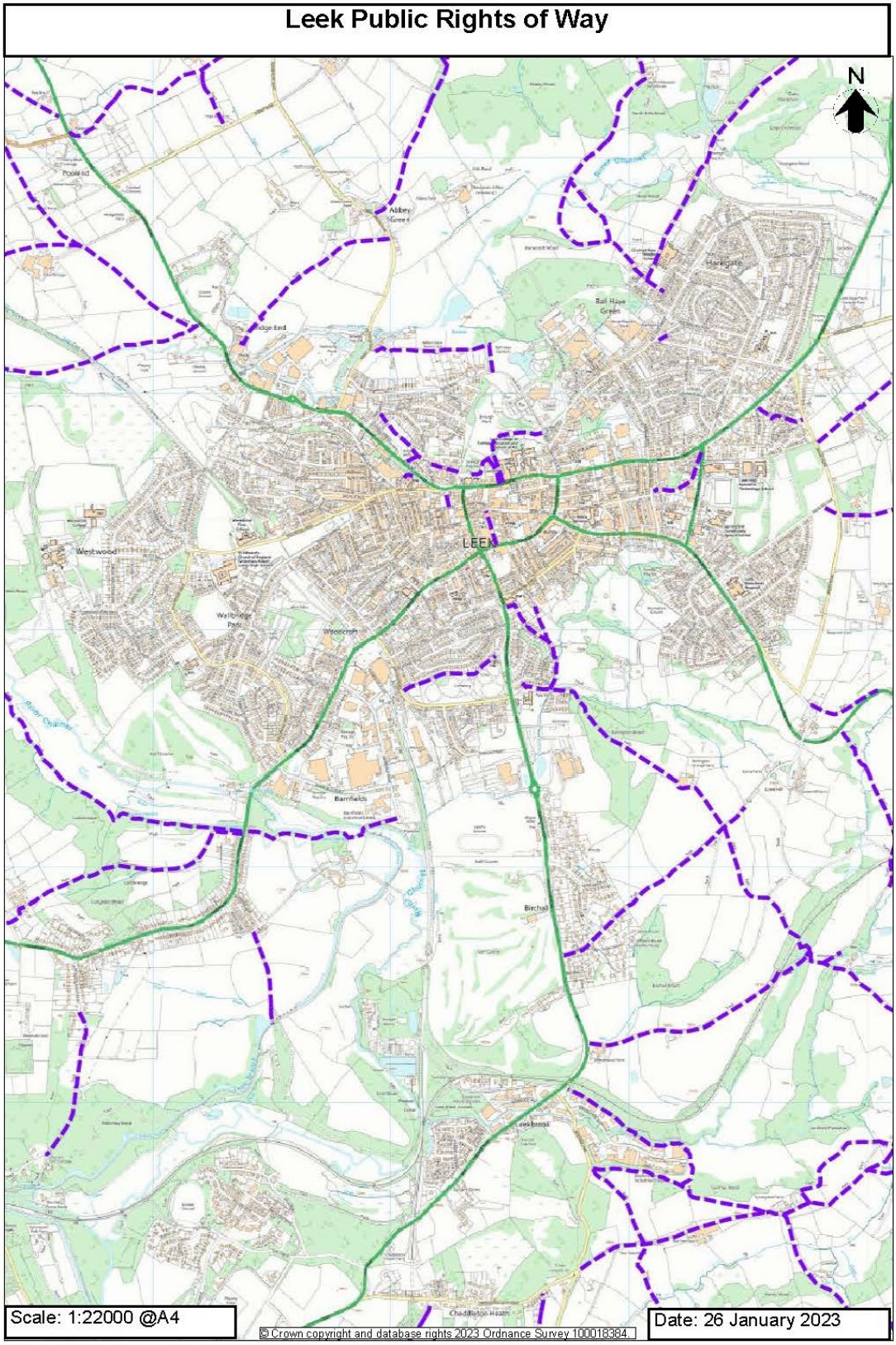
Policy T 1 Development and Sustainable Transport
Policy T 2 Other Sustainable Transport Measures

Leek has a bus station, with services to some destinations, but intermittent services to others. There are also the Moorlands Community Transport scheme and local cycle clubs. The establishment of Leek Railway Station, linking to Stoke-on-Trent, provides a real opportunity for the Town, with social, economic and environmental benefits in the future.

The Building for a Healthy Life standard places emphasis on pedestrian permeability and connectivity. It is now widely recognised that active travel helps to maintain good physical and mental health.

The following policy places emphasis on sustainable and active modes of transport, including cycling and walking.

15: Public Rights of Way



Current details are available on the Staffordshire County Council public rights of way interactive map.

Policy TRM1: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

1. **Development likely to generate additional journeys should include a balanced provision of transport options, including opportunities for active travel and sustainable transport, proportionate to the scale and nature of the scheme.**

2. **The layout of development should contribute to maintaining Leek as a walkable neighbourhood, for people with a range of mobilities, including by providing links where possible to the Parish's surrounding network of footways, paths and public transport routes.**

3. **Development should enhance or have no significant adverse impact on the amenity, safety, accessibility or outlook of existing footpaths, cycleways and bridleways, including the Rudyard Trail and Churnet corridor and footpaths.**

4. **Parking provision should include secure and covered storage for cycles and other personal vehicles.**

5. **Road layouts and specifications should allow for the easy passage of emergency and service vehicles, taking account of possible on-street parking.**

Interpretation

The policy should be applied in a way proportionate to the scheme being proposed. For example, some parts of the policy only apply where new layout of roads and/or footpaths is being proposed.

Active travel includes walking, running, cycling and wheeling.

Policy TCE2 includes the possible redevelopment of the Smithfield Centre, including potential for improving the facilities and environment of Leek Bus Station.

7. Infrastructure

7.1 Infrastructure Priorities

Priorities for this Neighbourhood Plan for the use of infrastructure monies are:

- Enhanced links between the Caldon Canal and Leek Town Centre;
- Improve / extend the footpath and cycling networks;
- Improving signage and interpretation;
- Enhancing the public realm and main approaches into the town;
- Improved pedestrian crossing facilities, including on St Edward Street;
- Recycling bins in the town centre;

8. Contact

Leek Town Council
15 Stockwell Street
Leek
Staffordshire Moorlands
ST13 6DH

Phone: 01538 381271
E-mail: clerk@leektowncouncil.gov.uk