

# Staunton (Coleford) Parish

## Character Assessment (adopted version)



## The Long Stone by Mary E Jenkins

I stand forlorn  
Alone, ignored,  
When once I stood so proud  
My place secure  
My purpose known  
My stature once admired.

Now few people notice me  
Or even want to stay.  
They travel past  
No time to pause  
No space within their day.

Only memories haunt this place,  
The ancient ones have gone,  
For they have left me here, bereft,  
No dance, no smiles, no song.

The moon is full and midnight strikes  
A pin becomes a dart  
The tears I shed are real blood  
Release my old stone heart.

[There is a Forest legend that if you go to the Staunton Long Stone on the night of a full moon and at midnight stick a pin into the stone, it will bleed real blood.]

Special thanks go to the following:

Forest of Dean District Council for providing 'Snapshot' Character Assessment Toolkit training and for maps provided for the drop in consultation sessions. Jack Cockburn for his assistance in relation to the historic development of Staunton. Staunton (Coleford) Parish Councillors for volunteering their time to undertake some of fieldwork.

*Front cover photographs clockwise: Cider press stone near Staunton House; All Saint's Church; view of the Welsh Mountains from High Meadow Farm.*

## Contents

1.Purpose of this document

2.Parish overview

3.Historic Core Character Area

4.Rural Hinterland Character Area

5.Wooded Slopes Character Area

6.Outlying Farmsteads Character Area

Appendix 1 Character Areas and their rationale

Appendix 2 Character Assessment methodology

# 1. Purpose of this document

1.1. This document has been produced by Staunton (Coleford) Parish Council following a comprehensive local study of the design and character of both the natural and built environment of Staunton.

1.2. The development of this document has been guided by a number of planning policies. Of particular relevance is paragraph 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. **Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:**

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;
- **respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;**
- create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

1.3. The document's development has also been guided by the Local Character and Assets statement included in the Forest of Dean District Council's Allocation Plan (Interim Draft):

This statement above expresses the intention to use and improve local evidence to inform planning decisions including plan making. It applies to character and design generally but also to information in respect of additional or existing heritage assets.

1.4. The document has been subject to public consultation and subsequent revision and was adopted by Staunton (Coleford) Parish Council on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015. Formal endorsement by the Forest of Dean District Council is now sought. Subject to this

endorsement it is expected that the document will form a material consideration in relation to future planning applications.

1.5. The document has been produced primarily to promote high standards of new development design that respects, conserves and enhances the character of the Parish. Developers are encouraged to refer to it when considering the location and design of their proposals.

1.6. The document identifies a range of both national and local heritage assets that make an important contribution to the character of the Parish. This list of assets will form the basis of a future study to help recognise and protect local heritage assets.

### Consultation stages

Stage	Date	
Public Consultation period	5 <sup>th</sup> Jan – 2 <sup>nd</sup> February 2015	<i>Current stage</i>
Village Hall consultation drop in sessions	20 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2015 (7-9pm) 24 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2015 (10-12am)	
Revised final draft	19 <sup>th</sup> February 2015	
Adoption of final draft by Parish Council	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	
Endorsement by Forest of Dean District Council	April/May 2015	*

## 2. Parish overview

2.1. The Parish of Staunton is situated high above the River Wye on the north-west fringes of the Forest of Dean, between Monmouth and Coleford in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Most of the parish is over 150m above sea level. It sits in a rolling landscape of interlocking convex hills and dry valleys formed from the underlying Carboniferous Limestone and Coal Measures and Devonian Sandstone.

### Landscape type

- National Character Area 105;
- Forest of Dean Landscape Character Assessment area 2b (Limestone Hills, High Meadow and Staunton);
- Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Landscape Management Zone 10.

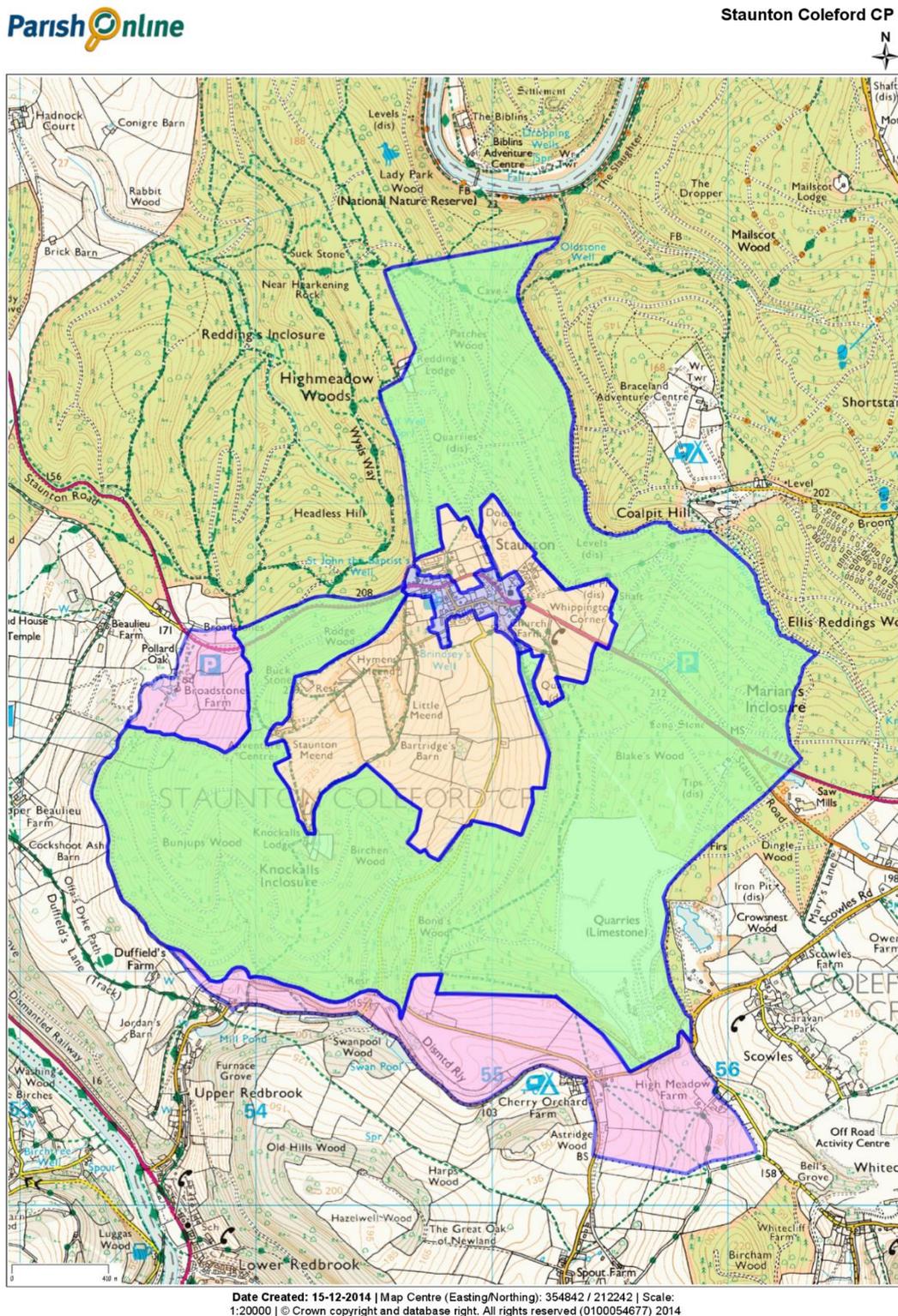
### Designations

- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB);
- Conservation Area;
- National Nature Reserve (NNR);
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- Key Wildlife Site (KWS);
- Listed Building (LB);
- Scheduled Monument (SM).

2.2. The Parish's stone megaliths, flint core and Bronze Age axe head finds are all evidence of human presence in the area from the Neolithic period onwards whilst archaeological finds around the village demonstrate Roman occupation. However, the area is thought to have remained relatively unsettled, with only a Saxon farmstead present, until the C12<sup>th</sup> when the construction of a fortified Norman manor house helped to establish the village of Staunton. Initially employment would have centred round the mining and smelting of iron ore but inevitably diversified as time went on. Following the demise of the manor house at Staunton the seat of power shifted south to an impressive new manor house constructed at High Meadow at the southern edge of the Parish. Built in the C17<sup>th</sup>, nothing above ground now remains of this once impressive building or the hamlet around it. The C19<sup>th</sup> saw turn-piking of the road through the village and construction of a tram and railway line along the southern boundary of the parish, which is now disused. Today the Parish is predominantly wooded. The small village of Staunton forms the main population centre encircled by woodland but mostly separated from it by fringing fields. Further fields and a number of isolated dwellings and farmsteads are located along woodland edges which also form the parish boundary at Broadstone and along the Upper Redbrook Valley. Despite the addition of 19<sup>th</sup> century housing the population of the Parish has not altered significantly for many centuries. The Parish consists of four distinct character areas. These include the Historic Core, Rural Hinterland, Wooded Slopes and Outlying Farmsteads Character Areas. The

boundaries of these character areas and their descriptions are provided in the following sections. The rationale for each character area is given at Appendix 1 and the methodology for producing the Assessment is provided at Annex 2. Figure 1 shows the location and extent of each character area.

Figure 1. Staunton Character Areas



## 3. Historic Core Character Area

### Character Summary

3.1. The character area sits at the northern end of a dry valley and consists of a linear progression of predominantly historic buildings and small areas of common land that follow a once ancient track way running east to west. The much more recent busy A4136 also runs through the character area to the north, connecting Coleford to Monmouth. Despite this much of the Historic Core, remains intact as a thin ribbon of built development along the historic main high street interspersed with occasional more recent additions.

### Landscape description

3.2. The historic core is well integrated with its surroundings being almost entirely encircled by woodland. The fringing fields, which form a clearing, separate the Historic Core from these wooded slopes and further aid its integration forming an important transition between development and woodland and allowing occasional more extensive views.

3.3. Several minor roads and tracks branch off the historic main high street connecting outlying farmsteads and recent modern cul-de-sac developments beyond the character area boundary. The historic core remains primarily rural in character despite the suburbanising influence of the A4136. Staunton Heritage Walk passes through the character area.

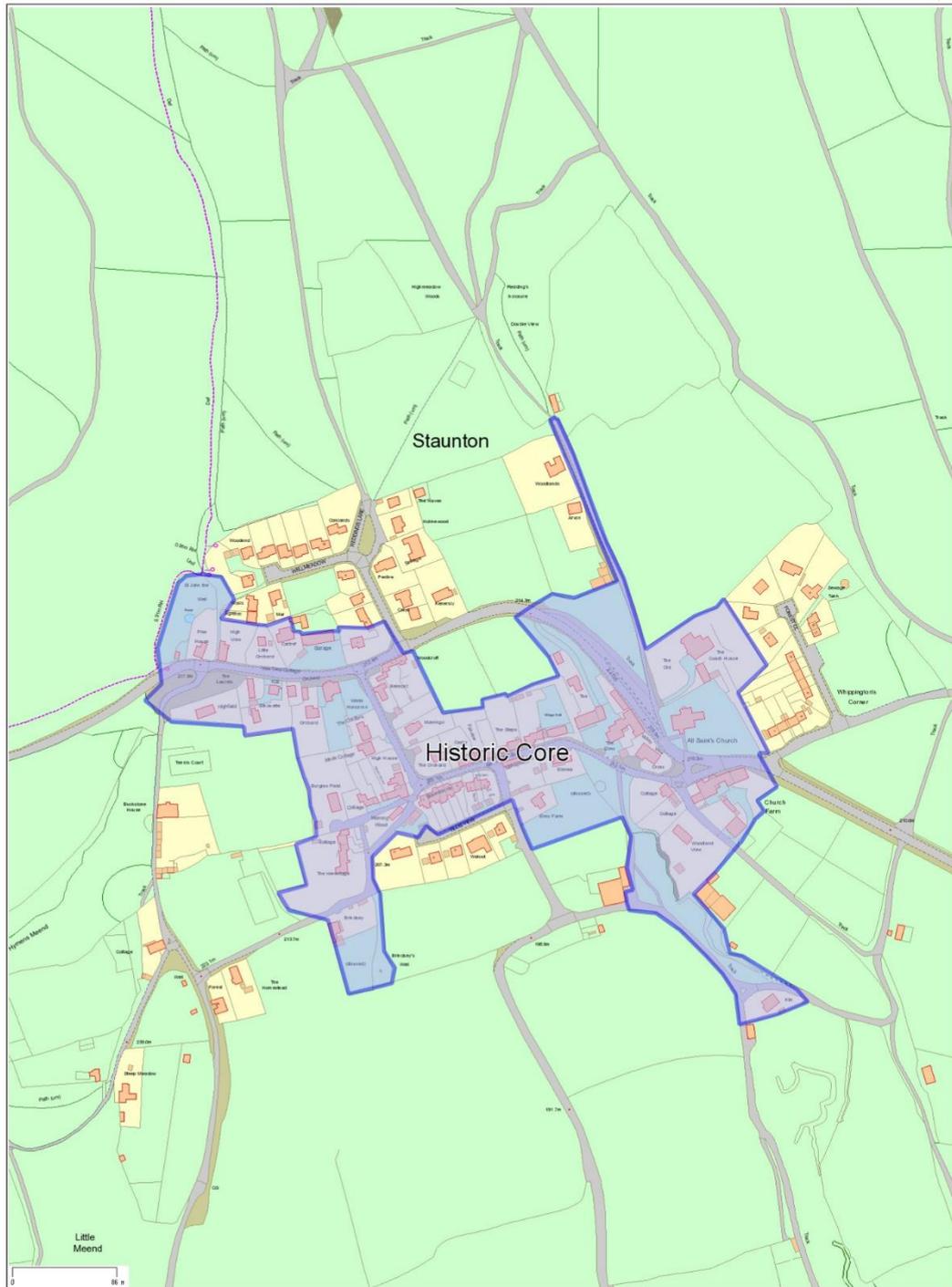
### Key views and landmarks

- All Saint's Church;
- Extensive long-distance views of the Forest of Dean and the Malvern Hills east out of the character area from the track leading north from the Old Rectory;
- Views in to and out of the character area from fields to the north and south from public rights of way and tracks/minor roads;
- Views east and west across parts of the character area from high ground at The Cross and Frog's Mouth Stone;
- Views of the church approaching the village along the A4136 from Coleford.

### Pattern and character

3.4. The settlement lacks any obvious centre. Instead development is linear, forming a ribbon running along an ancient dog-legged track marked by the church in the east and the Frog's Mouth stone in the west. Within the central section of the character area buildings are often joined together. At either end the pattern of development is slightly looser with properties being set further apart. Most buildings are set right up against or else set back only slightly from the historic main high street and often separated from it by low stone walls.

- 3.5. A variety of building styles exist within the settlement, however the Conservation Area and the vernacular architecture help to identify the linear historic core of the village. The church, village hall and pub act as focal points for the community.



## Buildings and details

3.6. The character area contains a variety of pre-dominantly two storey historic buildings (both designated and undesignated) and open space which contribute significantly to its sense of place including:

- Small areas of open space (including common land) both open and wooded at the Pound, The Butts, Frog's Mouth Stone and Castle Ditch;
- Historic listed buildings and scheduled monuments: All Saint's Church (grade I LB); The Steps and Arched Granary (grade II LB), Staunton Cross (Grade II LB and SM), The Almshouse (Grade II LB), Church Farm House and Barns (Grade II LB);
- Undesignated historic buildings/features/sites: Court Orchard field (site of previous Roman observation post and Norman Manor House); St John the Baptists Well (C14th); Brindsey Well (C16th); Brindsey Cottage (C16th); The Rectory (C17th); Staunton House (C17th with C19th additions); Arbour House (C17th previous pub and post office); Morning Wood (C17th previous pub and shop); Victoria Cottage (C18th); The White Horse Inn (C19th); Village Hall (C19th); Parish Pound (C18th); Pike House (C19th toll house);
- 'Town closes' to the rear of the historic buildings;
- Materials consisting predominantly of stone rubble and rough cast rendering with slate tiles;
- Common features include: wide fronted buildings; steep pitch roofs; chimneys; porches; stone lintels and sills.

## Sense of place

3.7. The character area enjoys a close connection with rural landscape, with views into the surrounding fields and woodlands beyond from the village and from several footpaths that lead into these fields and woodlands. The changing seasons and way this effects the surrounding woodland can dramatically change the back drop to the village. Buildings including the pub, church and village hall, that provide community services, act as a focal point to the village.



*All Saints Church*

### Positive features and special qualities

- 'Rural feel';
- Designated and undesignated heritage assets;
- Informal small open spaces;
- Absence of excessive street lighting.

## Negative features and detracting elements

- Environmental impacts of the A4136 and its severing effect on the character area;
- Inappropriate material finishes to some buildings;
- Modern housing estates adjoining the character area that do not respect the character of the Historic Core Character Area or its linear development.



*The Steps*

## Looking ahead – conserve, enhance, create

- There is a need to conserve the historic linear pattern of development;
- Where opportunities arise it would be desirable to improve the material finishes to some buildings;
- Where opportunities arise it would be desirable to decrease traffic speeds and volumes;
- It would be desirable to create off street public car parking provision for visitors to the surrounding countryside.



*The Pound*

## 4. Rural Hinterland Character Area

### Character Summary

4.1. The character area consists primarily of irregular small and medium sized fields. These almost entirely encircle the village providing an important setting to Historic Core Character Area, forming a valuable transition between it and the surrounding woodland and revealing the areas underlying landform, which elsewhere is obscured by extensive woodland. The character area also contains extensive areas of unenclosed historic common land including Staunton Meend and Hymens Meend. Several of the fields adjoining the village have been lost to 20<sup>th</sup> century housing development.

### Landscape description

4.2. The fields are found on dry valley slopes to the south of the village and flatter areas to its north bounded by well-maintained hedgerows. Extensive areas of unenclosed common land can also be found on the steeper valley slopes to the south-west. Public rights of way, roads and tracks run north-south through the character area. Staunton Heritage Walk passes through the character area.



*Well Meadow*

### Key views and landmarks

- Long distance views of the Forest of Dean and Black Mountains from Buckstone Lodge;
- Medium distance views of the Historic Core and Rural Hinterland Character Areas from Staunton Meend and Hymens Meend Commons;
- Short distance views of the Historic Core Character Area from footpaths to the north and south.

### Pattern and character

4.3. The landscape is primarily defined by an ancient irregular field system, grazed by stock and horses with well-maintained hedgerows. The past connection between those who lived in the Historic Core and who farmed within this Character Area are apparent through



*Whippington's Corner*

ancient field names such as Parson's Piece. Common land by contrast provides open areas of land with a patchwork of bracken and scrub.

4.4. Much of the development is defined by 20<sup>th</sup> Century housing stock forming cul-de-sacs and a more loose settlement pattern of scattered individual houses with large gardens. Some

historic houses with similarly large gardens can also be found within the Character Area.

### **Buildings and details**

- Ancient field systems with stone walls, clipped hedges and post and wire fences;
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century cul-de-sac developments, two storey, wide fronted, terraced or detached brick or rendered houses with tiled roofs, sometimes set back with a mixture of open, hedged and walled frontages;
- Other scattered modern and historic houses set in larger grounds, detached, stone rubble/render or brick;
- Undesignated heritage and natural features including: Roman and Norman archaeological sites; Wells; and common land (including one designated as a Key Wildlife Site)

### **Sense of place**

4.5. The character area has a rural and ancient feel, enjoying a close connection with both the Historic Core and Wooded Slopes character area which adjoins it. The character area is integral to the setting to the Historic Core Character Area whilst the Wooded Slopes Character Area provides a sense of enclosure and seclusion.



*Views from Staunton Meend Common*

### **Positive features and special qualities**

- Ancient field systems and unenclosed common land;
- Ancient hedgerows lining Public Rights of Way;
- Sweeping long distance views;
- Undesignated heritage assets: Roman, medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains; Buckstone House (C19th home of the Crown Receiver); and Meend Cottage (home to the coachman of King George III).

### **Negative features and detracting elements**

- 20<sup>th</sup> Century housing which fails to respect the historic development pattern and other characteristics of the Historic Core Character Area;
- Sub-urbanising effect of the busy A4136 on parts of the character area;
- In some places development has been allowed to occur right up to the forest edge.

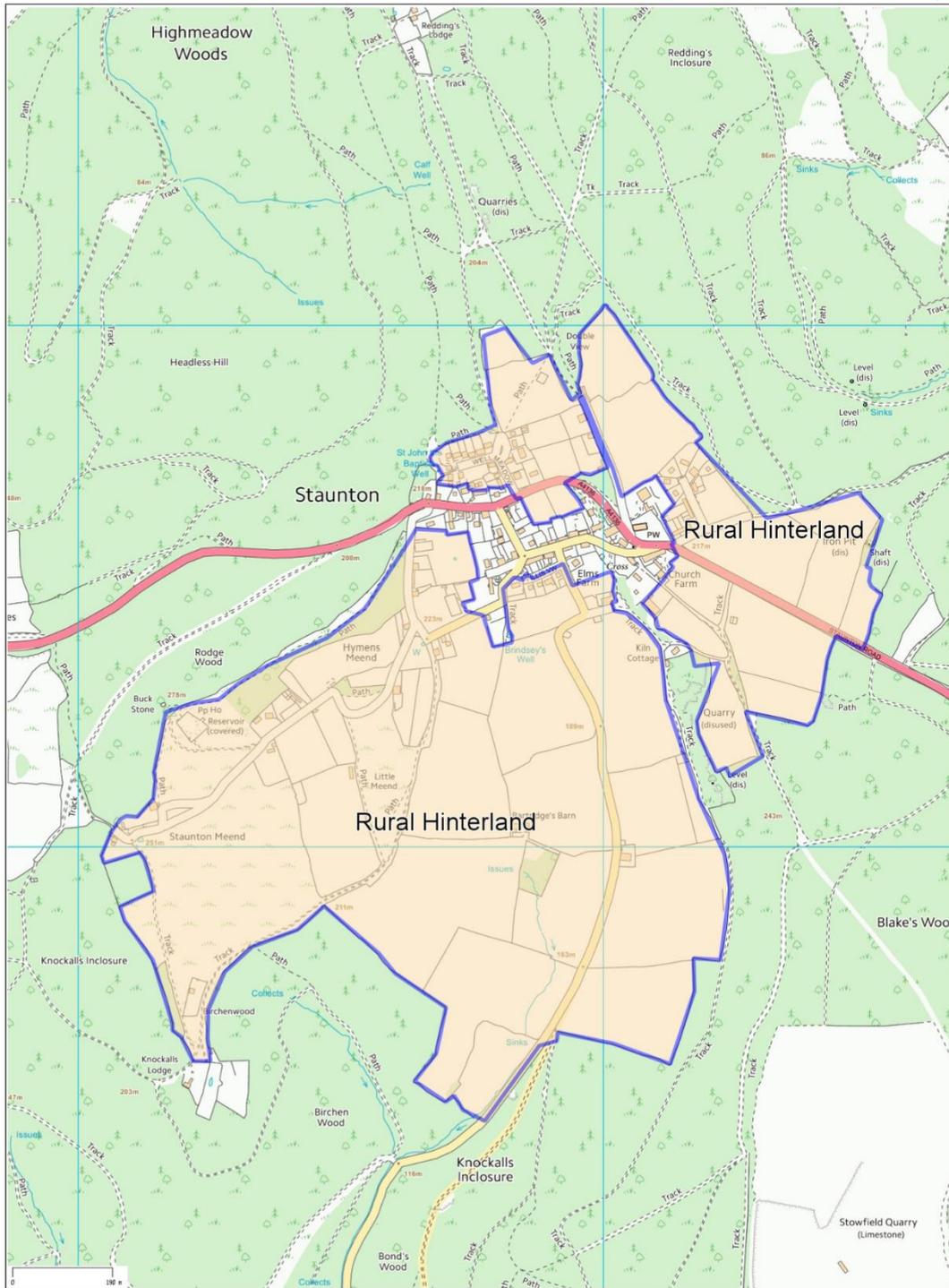
### **Looking ahead – conserve, enhance, create**

- There is a need to conserve and prevent further loss of the remaining ancient field systems that provide the setting to the Historic Core character area and the transition between this and surrounding woodland.
- Where opportunities arise it would be desirable to reinstate hedgerows along ancient field boundaries where these have been removed;
- Where opportunities arise it would be desirable to improve the material finishes to some buildings;
- It would be desirable to create a safe pedestrian crossing point across the A4136 to help address the severing effect of this road;

- It would be desirable to create more open areas on Staunton Meend to improve views across the Forest of Dean.



*View across the fields south of Staunton*



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## 5. Wooded Slopes Character Area

### Character Summary

5.1. Expansive areas of mixed woodland encircling the Rural Hinterland Character Area that cloak and obscure the hilly landform and higher ground. Scowles, coppiced woodland and lime kilns indicate historic iron smelting and forging activity. Managed for timber production, recreation and biodiversity. Buildings are conspicuously absent. These dense woodlands often restrict long distance views. However, long and medium distance views across Wales and the Forest of Dean are possible from the network of paths and tracks that run along the western and southern edges of the character area. The Wysis Way and the Ramblers High Meadow circular trail run through the character area.



*Bunjups Wood stone conglomerates*

### Landscape description

5.2. To the north the character area consists of an irregular spur of land that juts out in to the Wye Valley and to the south it covers the tops and sides or rolling hills. This area with its scowles, lime kilns and nearby forges would have been important for iron smelting.

### Key views and landmarks

- The Long Stone and the Buck Stone;
- Long distance views out of the character area towards Wales (including the Kymin and Monmouth) from north west slopes of Bunjups Wood;
- Medium distance views up the valley towards High Meadow farm from the southern edge of Bunjups Wood.

### Pattern and character

5.3. The woodland forms an extensive, irregular band of mixed and coniferous woodland enclosing the Rural Hinterland Character Area. These woodlands contain characteristic, occasionally massive, quartz conglomerate boulders. Nearly all of the woodland within the character area is ancient (i.e. continuously wooded since 1600), although some is replanted. Old fields such as Blakes, Windmill, Shobleys, and High Reddings to the south of village were lost to the creation of Blakes Wood in the 1820s.

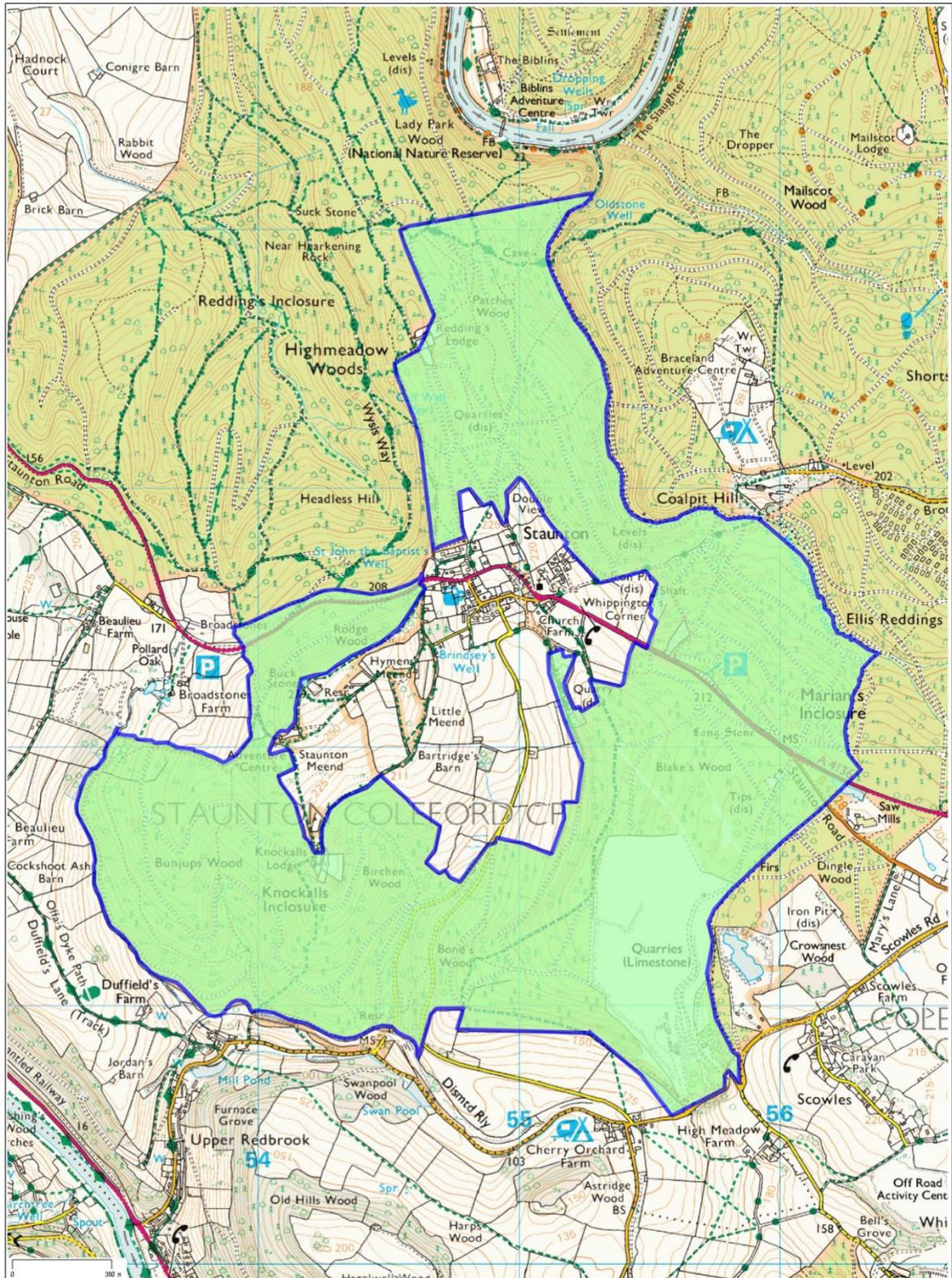
5.4. Nearly all of the woodland owned by the Forestry Commission within the character area is designated access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. In addition the woodlands are crisscrossed by a large number of paths and forest rides that, together with a number of public rights of way, form an extensive access network across the character area.

### **Buildings and details**

5.5. Originally constructed as dwellings for the estates woodsmen Knockalls Lodge and Reddings Lodge are historic stone rubble built, rendered buildings with slate roofs. Like most forest lodges they are found in forest clearings with several associated small fields. Buildings are otherwise noticeably absent from character area.



*Long distance views of Wales from Bujups Wood*



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## Sense of place

5.6. The Character Area has a deeply rural and ancient character. Away from the A4136 it can feel both remote and tranquil. Ridge lines provide a sense of elevation.

## Positive features and special qualities



*The Long Stone*

- Heritage assets: ancient megaliths (Long Stone, Buck Stone); Neolithic and Bronze Age finds; Calf Well (C13th); iron ore scowles (C17th, scheduled ancient monument); lime kilns;
- Ancient part natural, part mined 'fossilized' caves (including Lady Park show cave forming part of the popular 'Wye Tour' in the Victorian era);
- Sites of European, national and local wildlife significance (Upper Wye Gorge SSSI (part of the Wye Valley Woodlands SAC), Lady Park Wood NNR; Dingle Wood SSSI, Blakes Wood KWS, Staunton Wood KWS);
- European and nationally protected species including dormice, great crested newts, and lesser horseshoe bats; and
- Forest lodges and their small associated fields.

## Negative features and detracting elements

- Short distance views of Stowfield Quarry from surrounding woodland;
- Proximity of reservoir to the Buck Stone detracts from its setting;
- Woodland and scrub restrict long distance views northwest from the Buck Stone towards the Forest of Dean;
- Highway and public right of way signs detract from the setting of the Long Stone.

## 5.7. Looking ahead – conserve, enhance, create

- Where opportunities arise it would be desirable to establish more permanent and substantive view points across to Wales and the Forest of Dean;
- Where opportunities arise it would be desirable to relocate highway and public right of way signs away from the Long Stone;
- Reversion of non-native woodland to native woodland via natural regeneration or re-stocking.
- Reversion of Stowfield to woodland following the end of its operational life in accordance with approved restoration plans associated with the planning permission for its use as a quarry.

## 6. Outlying Farmsteads Character Area

### Character Summary

6.1. Farmsteads at Broadstone and the Upper Redbrook Valley on the lower slopes of otherwise wooded valleys with streams often dammed to create pools.

### Landscape description

6.2. The small farmstead of Broadstone sits on the north western slopes of a valley which forms the boundary to the parish and the border between England and Wales. It is enclosed on three sides by woodland and on its fourth by a small stream.

6.3. The other part of the character areas sits within the Upper Redbrook Valley. At its eastern end the valley slopes steeply but then becomes more sinuous and shallow as it progresses west, descending towards the River Wye. High Meadow and Cherry Orchard Farm sit in the upper half of the valley. A stream, originating from springs along the upper slopes, follows a minor road and historic tram and railway line along the bottom of the valley. The Burial Path runs through the character area.

### Key views and landmarks

- Long and medium distance views down the Upper Redbrook Valley towards Wales and the Sugar Loaf from High Meadow Farm;
- The Broad Stones, ancient megaliths including a 12<sup>th</sup> century parish boundary marker.

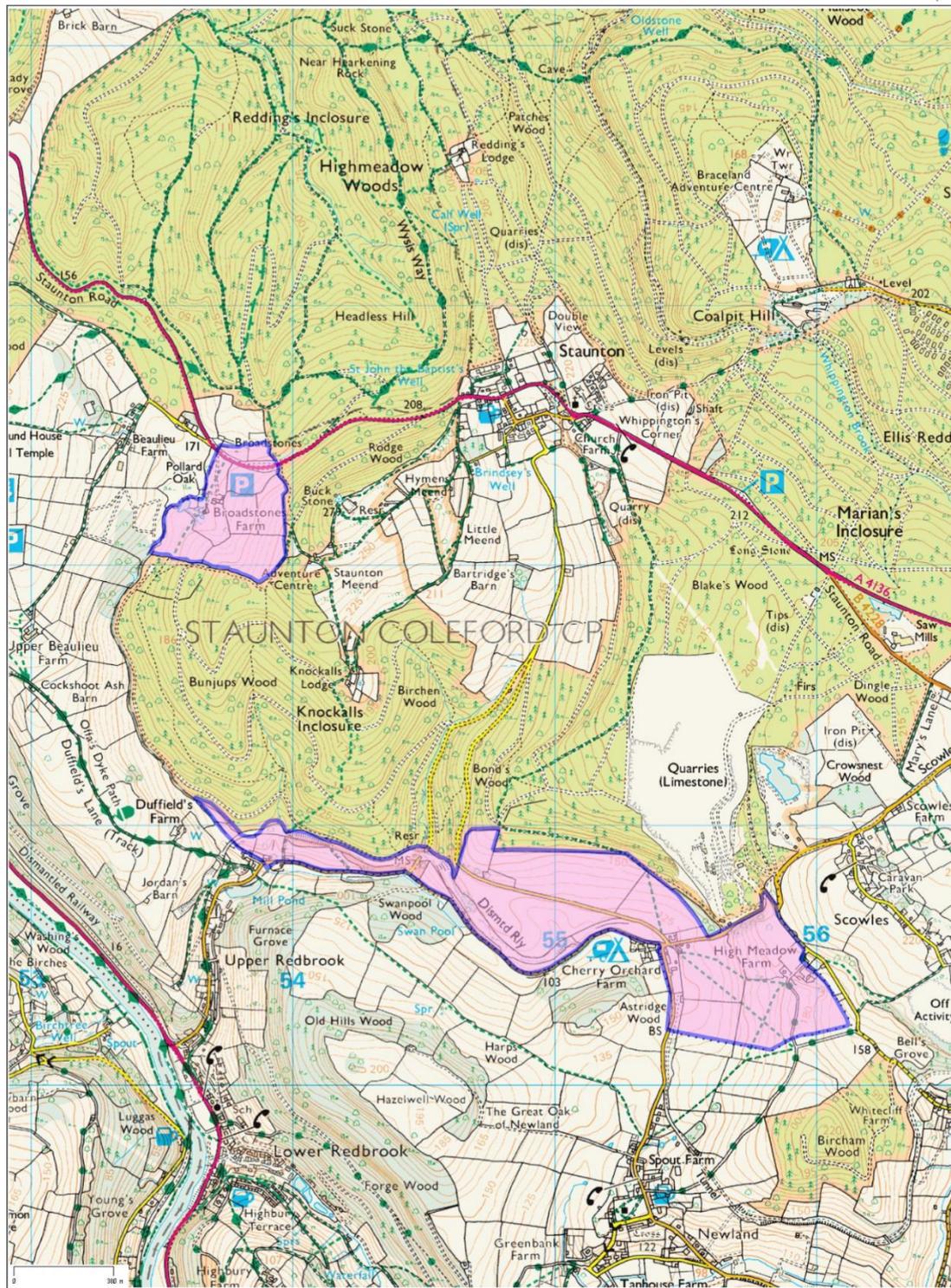
### Pattern and character

6.4. Broadstone is a small farmstead surrounded by woodland on three sides, consisting of a heavily restored farm house and outbuildings surrounded by irregular, small, horse grazed fields, with tall hedges, occasional veteran trees and scattered megalithic boulders. The upper slopes of some fields are becoming encroached by bracken. It is now part used as a caravan and camping site. Watercourses have been dammed to create fishing pools.

6.5. A ribbon of small and medium sized, irregular fields found along the western and southern slopes of the Upper Redbrook Valley form the other part of the character area. Woodland from the Wooded Slopes Character Area cloaks much of the upper slopes to the north. High Meadow and Cherry Orchard form the major farmsteads. A stream which forms the southern boundary of the Parish has been dammed to form a series of pools along its length.

### Buildings and details

- 6.6. A mixture of working farms with large barns, some of which have been converted for private residential use, constructed of stone rubble with slates roofs.



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## Sense of place

6.7. The valleys and surrounding woodland in both areas gives a sense of tranquillity, shelter and seclusion. At Broadstone the slopes and woodland form a natural amphitheatre whilst its veteran trees and megalithic boulders give a timeless and ancient feel to the area.

## Positive features and special qualities

- The Broad Stones;
- Veteran trees at Broadstone;
- Long distance views into Wales down the Upper Redbrook Valley from High Meadow Farm;
- Heritage assets: High Meadow Farm (grade II\*) and Barn (grade II); milestone at Swan Pool (grade II); High Meadow Manor House archaeological site (17<sup>th</sup> century); historic tram and railway line.

## Negative features and detracting elements

- Views of Stowfield Quarry from High Meadow;
- Urbanizing effect of the busy A4136 at Broadstone;
- Agricultural 'clutter' around megalithic boulders to the north of the A4136;
- Unsympathetic modern structures at Broadstone.

## Looking ahead – conserve, enhance, create

- Sympathetic restoration of Stowfield Quarry post operation;
- As the opportunity arises removal of agricultural clutter around the Broad Stones and improvements to the finishes of unsympathetic modern structures at Broadstone.



*View from High Meadow Farm towards the Black Mountains*

## Appendix 1 Character areas and their rationale

### Historic Core

A ribbon of buildings that follow the medieval and post-medieval footprint of the village along an ancient track way leading from a previous Norman fortified manor house (no longer present) in the east to the Frog's Mouth Stone in the west. The boundary is similar to the Conservation Area over much of its length. Many of the current buildings are of medieval or post-medieval date, several with current or past community functions. The Character Area includes remnant areas of forest waste. Modern estates which do not respect the linear pattern of development are excluded from the character area.

### Rural Hinterland

A mixture of small and larger field systems and extensive forest waste forming a clearing between the Historic Core and surrounding Wooded Slopes. Field names such as Parson's Land and Lord's Land to the north of village indicate a close association with the Historic Core. Critical to the setting of the Historic Core, providing transition to woodland and a green backdrop together with the Wooded Slopes Character Area. Modern estates forming part of the village but excluded from the historic core (see above) are included within this character area.

### Wooded Slopes

Extensive areas of conifer and broadleaf woodland predominantly restricted to steeper slopes within the Parish. Much of the woodland is ancient and contains evidence of pre-historic occupation. They contain a range of undated scowles, lime kilns and other features associated with historic iron ore extraction. Stowfield Quarry has eroded the Character Area but views into it are relatively limited.

### Outlying Farmsteads

Farms, often with medieval origins, and their surrounding fields. Areas including Broadstone Farm, High Meadow and Cherry Orchard.

## Appendix 2 Character Assessment methodology

This Character Assessment has been produced in accordance with the 'Snapshot' Character Assessment Toolkit developed by Space Studio. The summary methodology involves desk work to define and describe potential settlement and landscape character areas and field work to validate and improve on this. Baseline data from this work is then brought together to summarise each character area.

The desk study included a reviews of a number of important existing publications and other sources of data including:

- i) Staunton on the Forest Edge. J A Cockburn.
- ii) Forest of Dean Landscape Character Assessment. LDA Design. 2002. Forest of Dean District Council.
- iii) Wye Valley Management Plan 2009-14. Wye Valley AONB Unit. 2010.
- iv) Historic Environment Record (HER) data search for Staunton Parish.
- v) High Meadow Forest Design Plan. Forestry Commission.

Undesignated heritage assets have been primarily identified through the HER data search.