

Clopton Road area Character Study

1 Context

This is a small area of post-war houses originally built on long plots, developed immediately outside the estate markers¹ of Clopton House, to the north-east of Stratford, now on the edge of the built-up area. Pevsner² notes that the house is partly c. 1600, partly of the late-seventeenth century, and much altered in 1830.



Plate 1: Aerial view of study area

Image from Stratford upon Avon District Council

2 Site and setting: introduction

Clopton Road is a lengthy cul-de-sac leading almost due north from the town centre through the residential areas to the north-east of the Birmingham Road, and ultimately to Clopton House itself (now apartments).

2.1 Landscape

The land rises gently from the town centre to the ridge just outside the built-up area which is partly occupied by the Welcombe and Clopton Hills Local Nature Reserve. The study area itself is on a minor summit; the road dips gently to and past the estate markers, then rises again. The land also falls away to the west of the Clopton Road property boundaries.

The entire area is on Keuper marl.³

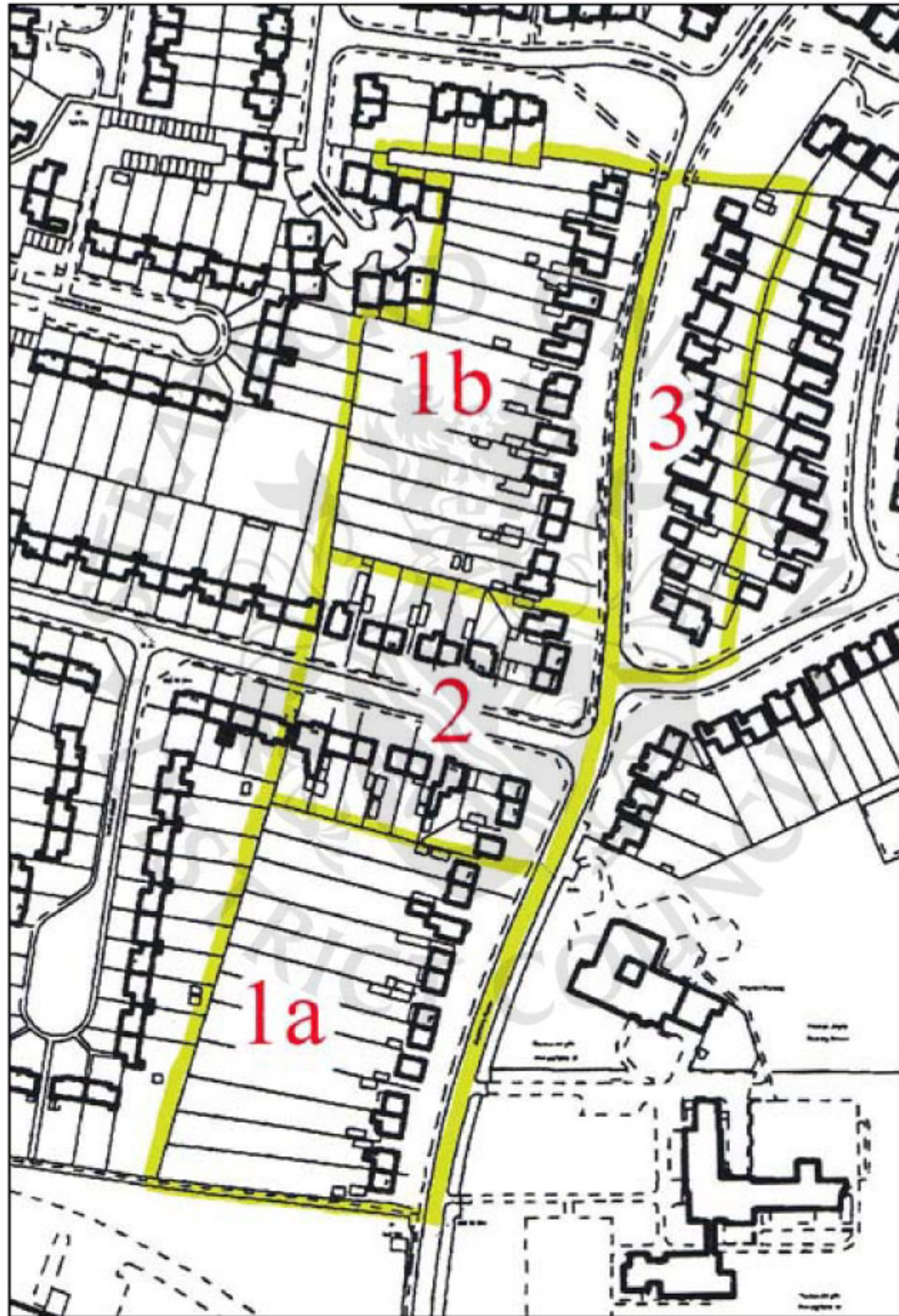
¹ These have all the appearance of individual gateposts, but there is no evidence of gates having been hung.

² Pevsner, N. and Wedgwood, A. (1966) *Warwickshire* (Buildings of England series) Penguin, Harmondsworth, p. 234.

³ Geological Survey sheet 200, 1974.

2.2 General character and plan form summary

Several distinct sub-areas can be identified on the basis of their plan and architectural characteristics:



Map 1: General character

Do not scale. North to the top.

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- Area 1: there are two areas of semi-detached houses west of Clopton Road, of very similar original characteristics. Of these, Area 1a remains considerably more original in terms of plot pattern. Area 1b has its original lengthy plots disturbed by one existing development and one for which permission has been granted (see below); this includes demolition of one of the original houses.
- Area 2: there is a series of houses on the side-road Justins Avenue of rather different plan and architectural characteristics, but developed at broadly the same period. Plots are much shorter.
- Area 3: the later post-war houses east of Clopton Road (although outside the specified area these are significant in contributing to its enclosed character)

2.3 Landmarks/views

The two landmarks within this area are the two estate markers, shown in red above. They are not large, but are quite unexpected in an area of this type of development; and they can be seen from a little distance against the backdrop of trees, because of the subtle rise and fall of the land and curve of the road. In this

respect, the open-plan nature of the front gardens of both sides of Clopton Road are most important.



Map 2: Landmarks and views

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There are two more minor views, one towards the more open countryside to the north-east, and the other west towards the extensive area of local authority housing, including an area of green open space.

3 Historical development: overview

This area was being developed on a large scale in the early and middle post-war period. The different stages of development are clearly marked here by different house types on either side of Clopton Road; the development included employment land (to the south-west) and schools (east of Clopton Road).

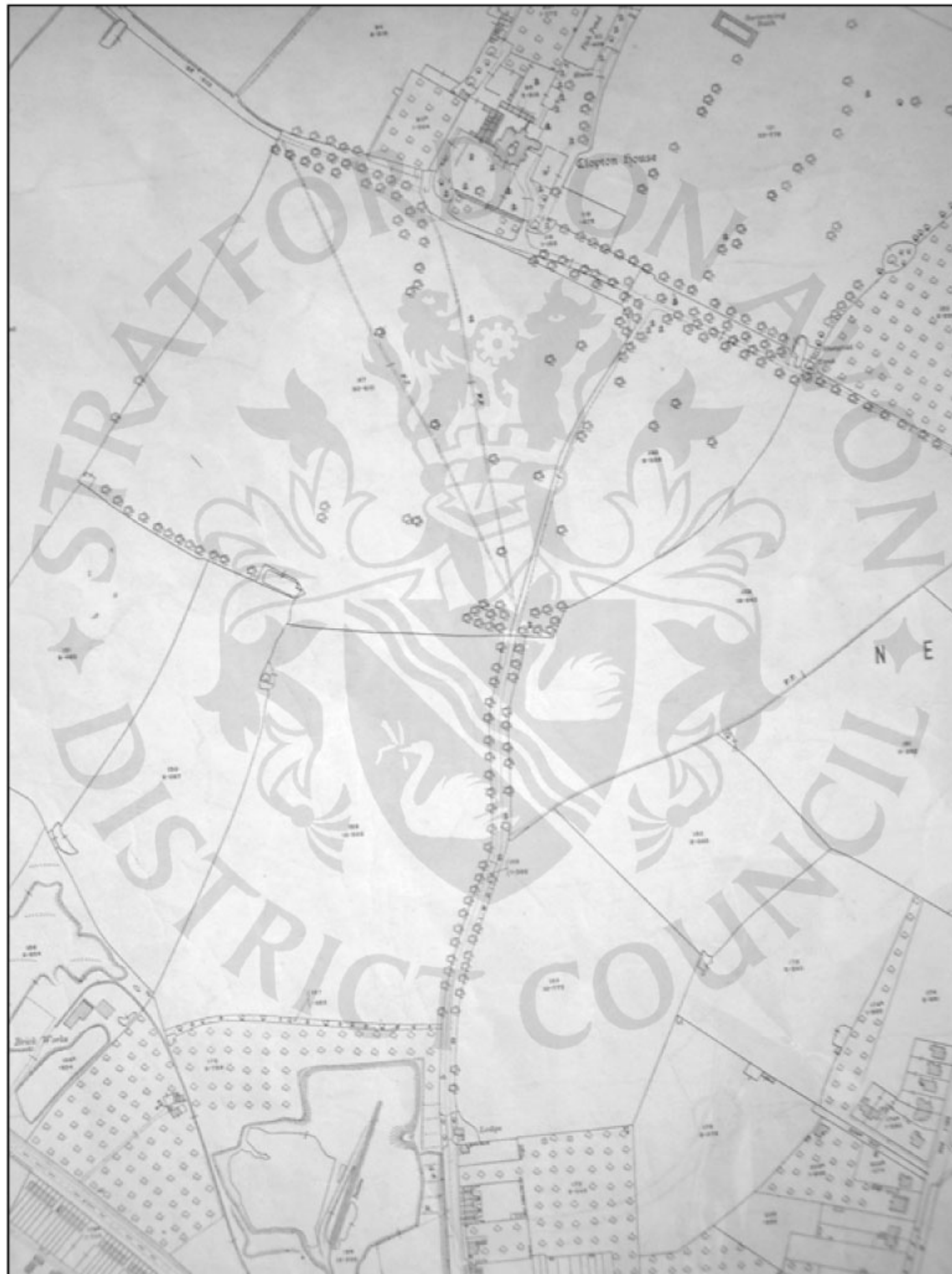
3.1 Details of the study area, using historical maps

The Clopton Estate was put up for auction on 23 July 1873. The map accompanying the sale particulars⁴ shows that the early post-war development (Areas 1 and 2) lie on Field 39, "Fourth Ground", the later development to the east (Area 3) is part of Field 43 "The Fourteen Acres" and the school and nursery occupy most of Field 40, "Further Black Ground". The estate markers are not separately shown. There are small groups of trees immediately north-east and south-west of the markers, and a row to the north-east of Clopton Road. Land

⁴ A photocopy is in Stratford library, Local Studies collection, 728.8.

immediately to the south of these fields was owned by Joseph Burman and J. Lowe, and hence not part of the estate. A small building is shown at the southern corner of Field 40, and immediately to its south, on Lowe's land, a Lodge is shown. Neither have survived.

The 1914 OS 25" sheet shows that Fields 39, 43 and 40 had survived unchanged. The areas of trees have grown, and a second row has been planted to the south-west of Clopton Road: evidently the hornbeams which still survive.



Map 3: Ordnance Survey 1914

The houses west of Clopton Road were constructed in the early post-war period.



Map 4: Contemporary GIS

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The contemporary map shows the development completed by slightly later houses to the east of Clopton Road; and the infill development to the north-west that has encroached on to some of the extensive plot tails.

4 Spatial analysis

This is a small area consisting essentially of a row of houses to the northern end of Clopton Road, itself a residential access road (albeit a cul-de-sac) to extensive estates north-east of the town.

4.1 Character and inter-relationship of spaces

The only significant open spaces relevant to this tiny area are the green spaces on either side of Clopton Road immediately to the north. These spaces are dominated by mature trees.

Within the area, the width of the road – and, hence, the setting of the estate markers – is enhanced by the open-plan front gardens on both sides of the road.

Gaps between many of the houses permit passers-by to be aware of the existence of substantial rear plots.

4.2 Movement patterns/uses

This is an entirely residential area, although there is a school/nursery immediately to the south-east. The school draws vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Clopton Road is busy, despite being a cul-de-sac, as it serves a substantial residential area.

5 Built character analysis

5.1 Plot patterns

Area 1

Clopton Road (west side)

This analysis shows that the southern part (Area 1a) is still regular and original, but the effect of the truncation of some plots on the northern part (1b) is noticeable.

	Plot length (m)*	Plot width (m)**	Plot area (m ²)
Area 1b (north part)			
Average	74.94	9.73	682.96
Maximum	88.32	13.97	910.96
Minimum	57.98	8.92	516.12
Area 1a (south part)			
Average	81.8	9.41	809.69
Maximum	84.68	10.63	947.48
Minimum	80.14	8.7	723.53
Average Area 1	78.37	9.57	746.32

* measured along the western plot boundary.

** measured along the street frontage

Area 2

Justins Avenue

This area is significantly different, with much shorter and smaller plots.

	Plot length (m)*	Plot width (m)**	Plot area (m ²)
Average	34.8	9.85	362.96
Maximum	38.42	11.34	502.87
Minimum	27.47	8.9	286.53

* measured along the western plot boundary.

** measured along the street frontage

Area 3

Clopton Road (east side)

This area is clearly a later post-war development, with much smaller plots than those characterising the west side.

	Plot length (m)*	Plot width (m)**	Plot area (m ²)
Average	34.37	10.3	365.25
Maximum	36.29	12.39	455.82
Minimum	32.73	8.2	258.6

* measured along the western plot boundary.

** measured along the street frontage

5.2 Building patterns

Area 1

Clopton Road (west side)

	Building setback (m)*	Building footprint (m)**	% of plot built over
Area 1b			
Average	11.33	93.94	13.93
Maximum	16.92	146.01	19.3
Minimum	8.6	66.88	8.5
Area 1a			
Average	10.44	76.13	9.52
Maximum	14.26	94.39	12.9
Minimum	8.46	56.26	6.3
Average Area 1	10.88	85.04	11.73

* measured perpendicularly from the front of plot to the nearest part of the building.

** includes all mapped extensions, outbuildings etc.

Area 2

Justins Avenue

	Building setback (m)*	Building footprint (m)**	% of plot built over
Average	10.02	81.09	22.59
Maximum	11.47	124.64	30.3
Minimum	8.76	57.64	15.4

* measured perpendicularly from the front of plot to the nearest part of the building

** includes all mapped extensions, outbuildings etc.

Area 3

Clopton Road (east side)

The similarity of building set-backs from the pavement edge between Area 1 and Area 3 is significant in terms of the visual spaciousness of the approach to the estate markers.

	Building setback (m)*	Building footprint (m)**	% of plot built over
Average	11.36	88.8	24.38
Maximum	13.11	118.34	32.1
Minimum	10.15	57.44	17.6

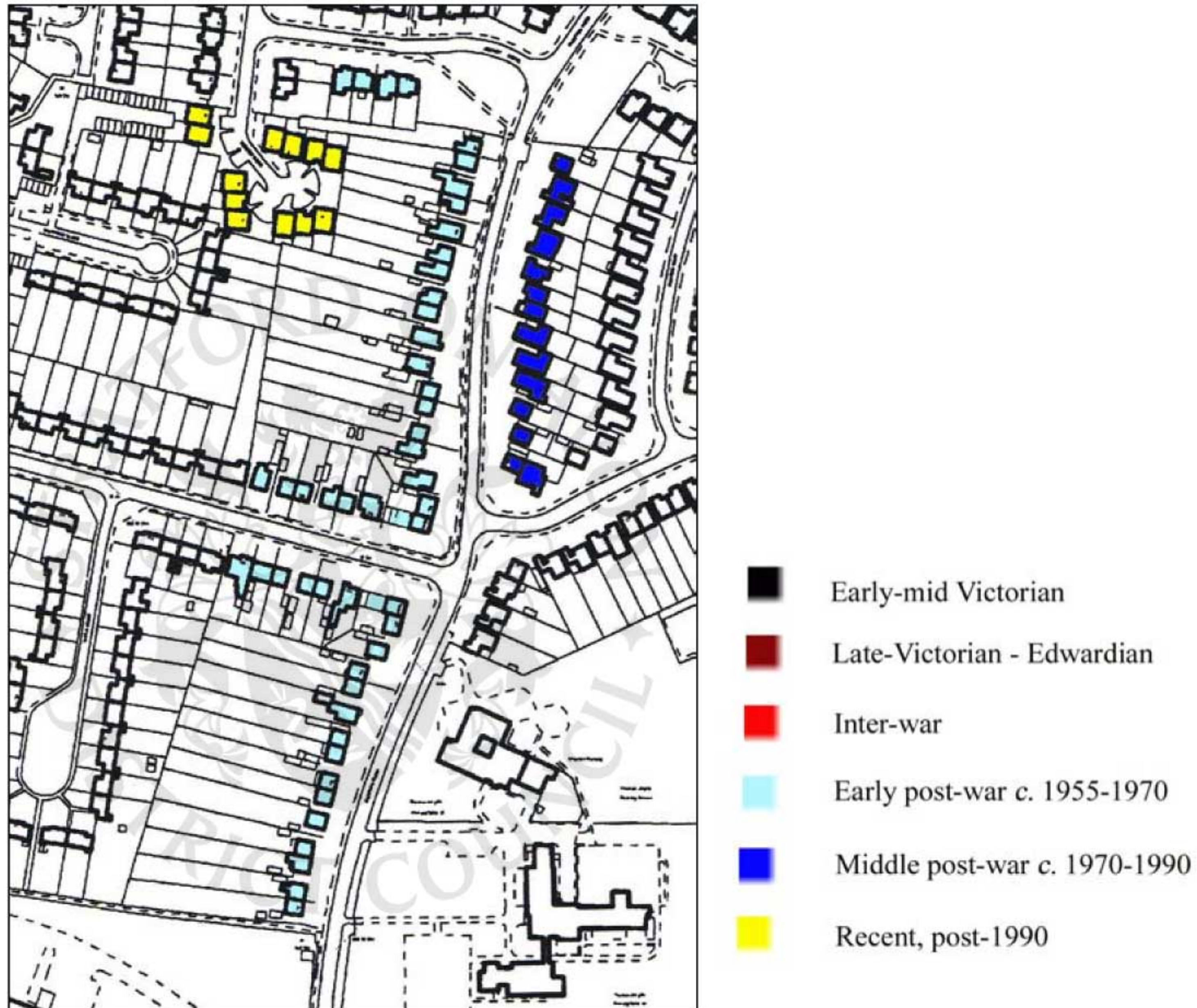
* measured perpendicularly from the front of plot to the nearest part of the building

** includes all mapped extensions, outbuildings etc.

5.3 Architectural and/or historical qualities of buildings

The estate markers are of significance.

The individual houses of the post-war suburbia are typical of the period but individually unremarkable. The patterning, of building forms (especially detached and semi-detached), and gable- or eaves-to road, is quite subtle and almost repeats in areas 1a and 1b. This is more clearly seen on maps, but is a noteworthy characteristic of the area's original layout.



Map 5: Building periods

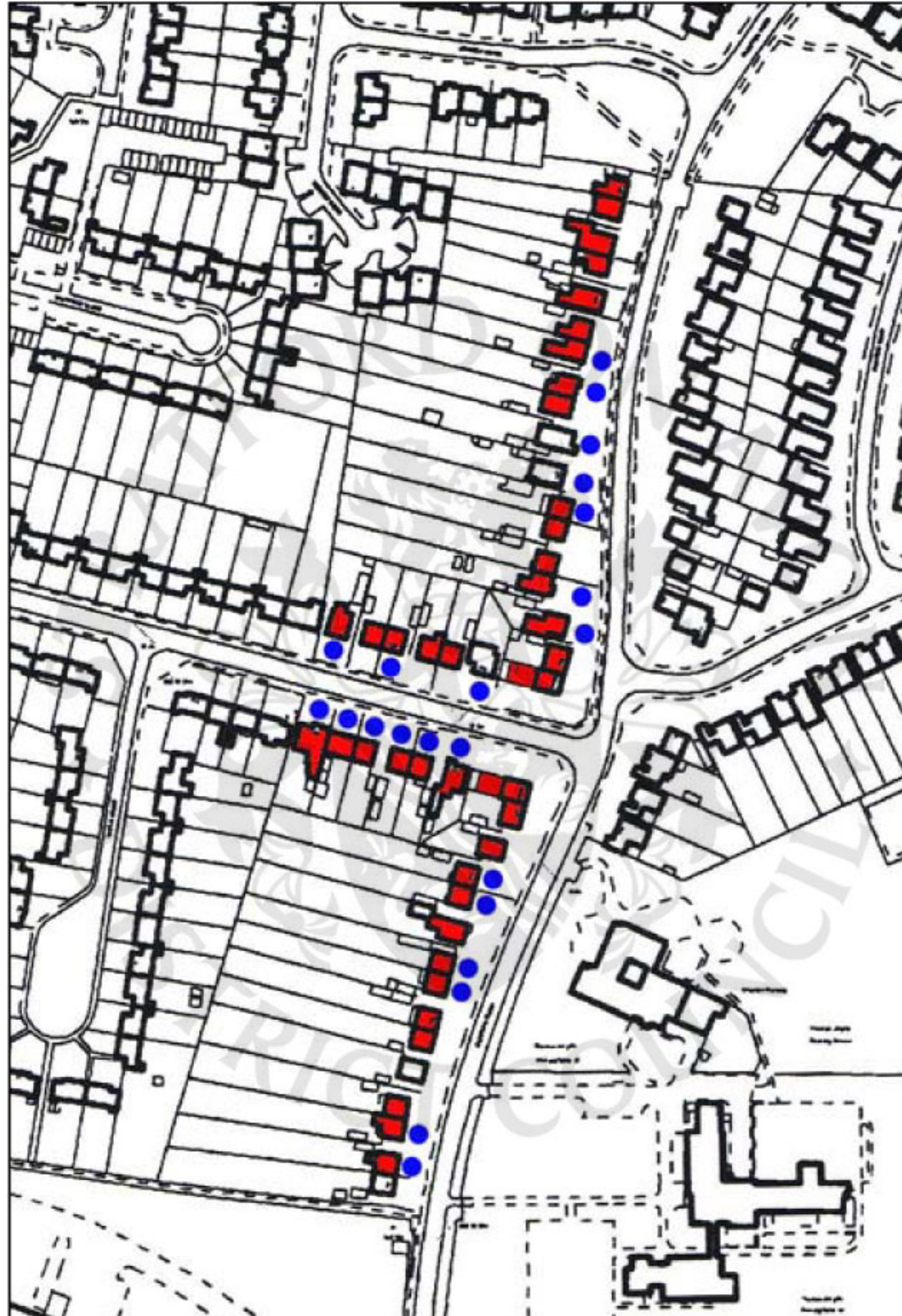
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Plate 2: 'Anglo-Scandinavian' style

The houses are mostly semi-detached pairs, eaves facing the road. They have brick ground floors and painted render upper floors (a typical style of the period, called "Anglo-Scandinavian"⁵).

The gardens would originally have been open-plan, but some have been enclosed with low hedges or, in one case, a stone wall.



Map 6: Front garden conversions and replacement windows

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On Map 6, red shows the replacement of original windows (usually steel-framed) with uPVC, and blue dots indicate the partial or entire conversion of front gardens for car parking.⁶ The few original steel window frames surviving merit some care and maintenance. Likewise, some buildings possess mock wooden window shutters (a common fashion in the 1950s and 1960s), and some of these are in need of maintenance.

Visual inspection suggests that a number of houses have had rear extensions, garages and other outbuildings, although planning records show that most predate 1990.

5.4 Audit of heritage assets

The significant heritage assets are the estate markers of Clopton House. They are stone-built and well detailed. They are rather weathered, with some

⁵ Edwards, A.M. (1982) *The design of suburbia* Pembridge Press, London.

⁶ From visual estimate, over 50% of the road frontage.

patching, and one is leaning. They are both Listed Grade II and dated as late-seventeenth century.



Plate 3: Estate Markers

None of the houses themselves appear to be potentially listable as individual structures.

There is no record of significant archaeological interest in this area; although a Neolithic axe was found "at Clopton" and there may have been a medieval settlement in the area.⁷

5.5 Contribution of key unlisted buildings

There are no individual unlisted buildings whose individual contribution could be described as "key".

5.6 Public realm audit

The clutter of miscellaneous street furniture adjacent to the estate markers detracts from their character and appearance (see Plate 3). Street furniture is standardised, save that a couple of the telegraph poles retain turned finials. Cable TV boxes are located at the rear of pavements (with the intrusive exception of Plate 3) and painted green, although still subject to some graffiti.

The road and pavement surfaces are of standard patched tarmac; the kerbs are standard concrete.

6 Other contributing factors

6.1 Land uses

The area is wholly residential in character, although it is bordered by educational premises (to the south) and industrial/employment premises (to the south-west).

6.2 Vegetation

⁷ Warwickshire County Council, Sites and Monuments Record.

The mature street trees, and equally mature trees located on the open spaces to the north, are very significant aspects of the landscape even when not in leaf. However, they are very mature, and one diseased hornbeam has already been reduced to a trunk albeit that it shows some regrowth. (NB this would be felled and replaced by a development proposal discussed below)



Map 7: Vegetation

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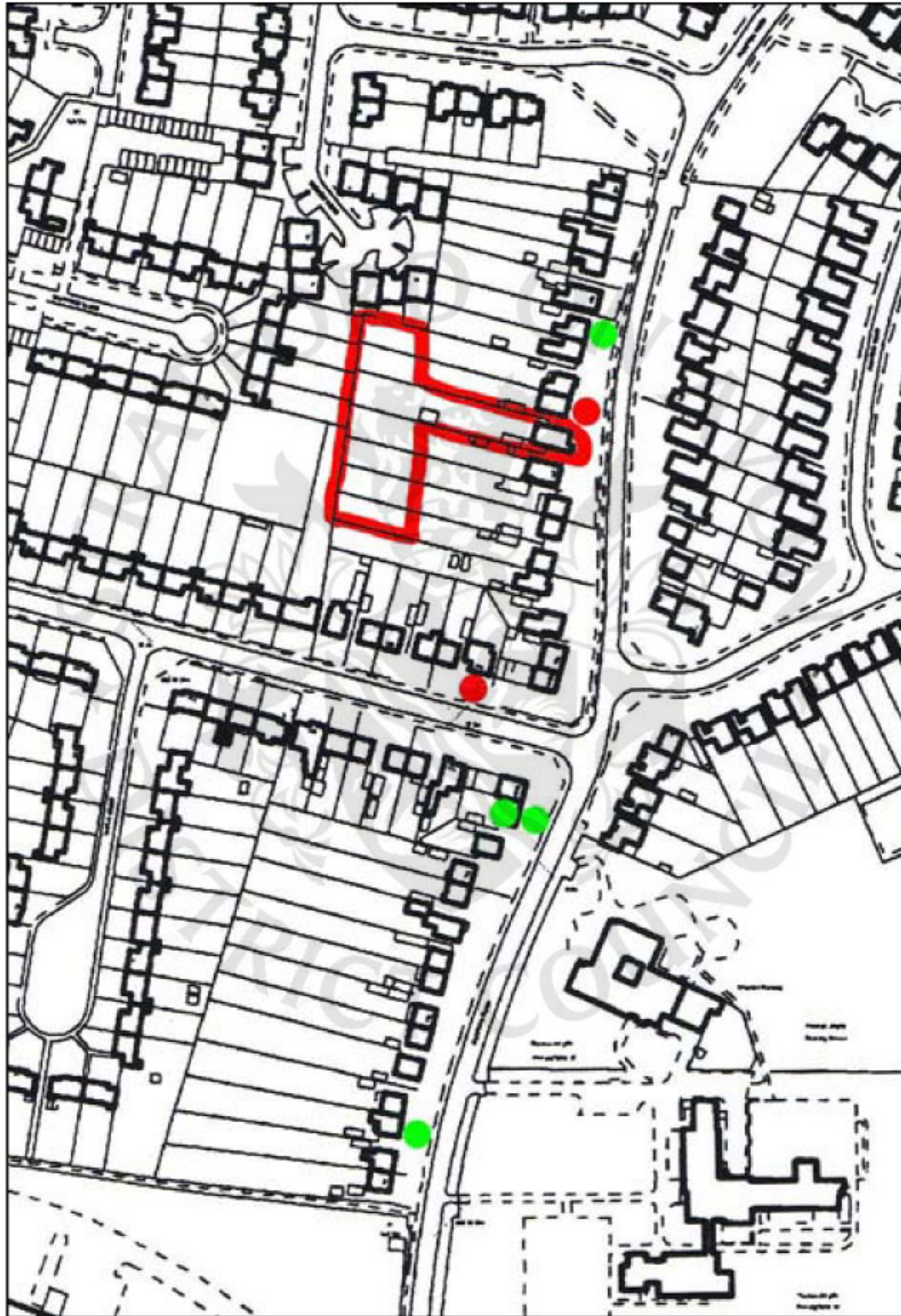
7 Appraisal

7.1 Development pressure analysis

Map 8 shows development pressure since 1990. Red dots are extensions. Green dots are applications to lop or fell trees. This does suggest that the street trees are under some pressure.

The most significant pressure results from a developer's application in 2004 to demolish 183 Clopton Road and construct 8 dwellings on a site formed through amalgamating a series of rear gardens.⁸

⁸ Application reference 04/00686/FUL submitted 4/3/2004.



Map 8: Development pressure

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The existing building to be demolished is the right-hand detached house in the photograph below, which also shows the diseased and pollarded hornbeam.

Development of 'backland' sites for housing, where such development would be detrimental to the character, traditional settlement pattern, or amenity of the location will not normally be permitted.

The variety of house types and their positions in their plots in both areas 1a and 1b are such that the loss of one property does not significantly detract from the area, although it does introduce another opening into the built-up frontage.



Plate 4: Proposed demolition of 183 Clopton Road

7.2 Key positive features/areas

The most significant positive features are the estate markers in their green setting; hence the combination of mature street trees and green open spaces, and the largely open-plan front gardens, are significant in framing the view on approaching these features.

The area as originally outlined (areas 1a, 1b and 2) is one of a carefully-designed early-postwar residential development, showing two series of long plots and the deliberate design of a minor road junction using different dwelling types and plot sizes.

Despite window replacements (the originals in any case being large-paned) and front garden conversions for car parking (which nevertheless retain the open aspect) a great deal of the original design character remains; particularly in area 1a.

7.3 Neutral areas

Justin's Avenue appears to be a 'neutral' area; the house design is not of such uniform quality and the scale and nature of changes slightly greater.

7.4 Negative features/areas (loss, damage, intrusion)

The extent of damage to the original design character of area 1b through the insertion of Verney Gardens and the proposed new development, especially including the demolition of no. 183, is such that – despite its proximity to the main positive features of the estate markers – its character is substantially compromised.

7.5 Character zones

Several character areas can readily be identified based on architectural and plan characteristics, and on the existing and proposed backland developments (Map 9).



Map 9: Character zones

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7.6 Areas under existing or potential threat

Inevitably, given the precedent of Verney Gardens and the recent development proposal in area 1b (outlined in blue: the area of main character loss), the remaining and as yet unaltered plots of area 1a are substantially threatened.

8 Discussion of special characteristics

The area's principal architectural or historical interest lies in the estate markers. The houses are of no intrinsic special interest and serve to define the street-space leading to the estate markers. Other types and styles of building would serve this function as well; although the largely open character of the front gardens (green on the map above) is valuable in setting the scene for the estate markers when approached from the town.

The original rural boundary features have gone; and the open agricultural land in which the markers stood has now been covered by suburban development. Their original context is largely lost.

The houses on the west side of Clopton Road stand in characteristic length and open plots, which do contribute to the area's character; although some to the north (area 1b) have been, or are proposed to be, truncated.

9 Recommendation on designation

Although the estate markers are striking and should be retained in their current open setting, there is little remaining of their original setting, and the post-war housing is of little intrinsic architectural interest. Designation as a conservation area is therefore not recommended. Following the legal definition of a conservation area, and mindful of precedents elsewhere, there is insufficient here of “special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.⁹

However, it is suggested that Area 1a (shown shaded red) could be considered for designation as an “Area of townscape interest”. This would highlight the remaining unity of the original design conception of the area, including both architectural and plan form. Nevertheless, if a wider study of Stratford showed that this combination of architectural and building form was a rare survival in this locale, a stronger case could be argued for designation of Area 1a as a conservation area.

10 Existing policy

Guidance in the Local Plan, the Town Design Statement, and the District Design Guidance, applies.

11 Policy and management suggestions

The clutter of street furniture should be rationalised and relocated further away from the estate markers. The letterbox, a valued local resource, could easily be sited more appropriately within several metres of its present location.

Consideration should be given to the management – and replacement as appropriate – of the mature trees close to the estate markers, and further along Clopton Road. Many of the trees already have Tree Preservation Orders.

Any individual building replacements in Area 1b should not be set further forward on its plot than 8.6m, and 10m in Area 3 (the minimum setbacks found in those areas), in order to retain the open setting and views towards the estate markers.

For the same reason the open nature of the front gardens in both Areas 1b and 3 should be retained as far as possible. Tall planting (other than replacements for the ageing hornbeams), hedges and fences should be discouraged. The same approach should be taken in Area 1a, but for reasons of retaining the original open-plan character of this area.

Development of ‘backland’ sites for housing, where such development would be detrimental to the character, traditional settlement pattern, or amenity of the location will not normally be permitted.

⁹ 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act.