
**CONSERVATION AREA
CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

AMINGTON HALL

On behalf of

**TAMWORTH BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

CgMs Ref: SW/SH/8898

Date: March 2008

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1.0 Introduction and Planning Policy Context

- 1.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on every local planning authority to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Such areas can then be designated as conservation areas.
- 1.2 The Act also states that local planning authorities should, from time to time, review their existing conservation areas and formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas.
- 1.3 Essentially, the added planning controls that conservation area designation brings include controls over demolition, strengthened controls over minor development and the protection of trees. Within the Tamworth Local Plan (2001-2011, adopted July 2006), policies ENV22 and ENV23 concern conservation areas.
- 1.4 The appraisal defines the special interest of the Amington Hall Estate Conservation Area and includes proposals for enhancement of its character and appearance. The more clearly the special interest that justifies designation is defined and recorded, the sounder will be the basis for development plan policies, development control decisions and proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character of an area. A detailed survey of the area was carried out by staff of CgMs Ltd in September and October 2007.
- 1.5 It is intended that this guidance will be useful for residents, developers and the general public in understanding the significance of the area and will help to ensure its special interest and character can be preserved and enhanced for future generations. This document follows English Heritage's 2006 guidance on the production of conservation area appraisals and is intended to:
- Assist in defining what is of 'special' architectural or historic importance
 - Give recommendations on features and characteristics that should be protected

- Identify possible areas for future enhancement within the designated area
- Provide guidance on the form, style and location of future change and development within the designated area.

2.0 Overview of the Conservation Area

2.1 The set of plans in Appendix 2 aims to identify the elements which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and also illustrate recommendations for alterations to the conservation area boundary and for additional designations.

2.2 Plan 1 shows the existing conservation area boundary and statutorily listed buildings (buildings identified by English Heritage as being of special architectural or historic interest). Plan 2 shows significant views, important trees, walls, railings or hedges of note, and 'enhancement' sites.

2.3 'Important' trees are also identified. These are usually highly visible from public places and/or they contribute to the setting of a listed building or a building of local note and in this case contribute to the history of the parkland setting. Clearly there is a large number of trees on the estate, many in groups, and not all individual trees have been picked out. The rough locations of those that have particular amenity value are indicated, but all existing groups of trees are important historically and visually, and should be retained. Important open spaces are not marked on Plan 2, as the whole estate is an important open space, especially significant in its proximity to Tamworth, which can be seen in long-distance views from the estate, demonstrating its relative lack of isolation from the urban spread.

2.5 Important unlisted walls and other forms of boundary enclosure, such as railings or hedges, are recognised. These are usually built of local materials and help to define spaces and frame views. Significant views into, out of and around the proposed conservation area are also identified for it should be appreciated that a conservation area's character does not necessarily end with a line drawn on a map. Often the character is closely associated with attractive views and vistas out to other areas, sometimes via gaps between buildings, along streets or across open spaces. Views

within an area such as that to a church, school or other landmark building can also be particularly valuable.

AMINGTON HALL CONSERVATION AREA

3.0 Introduction and General Character Summary

- 3.1 The Amington Hall Estate lies 4 miles northeast of Tamworth and north of the village of Amington. The large conservation area covering the estate was designated in September 1998. Its focus is the Grade II listed Amington Old Hall, Grade II* listed Amington Hall and surrounding 19th-century parkland. The estate is accessed off Ashby Road and the conservation area boundaries are based on the 1927 estate boundary which also encapsulates the site of the deserted medieval village of Amington and associated ridge and furrow.
- 3.2 The area has long been a parkland estate. Part of a medieval fishpond system remains, as does an avenue of trees, fox coverts, duck decoy and landscaped grounds. The conservation area is based on the extent of the estate in 1927 covering 106.4 hectares, but excludes areas of land previously in the estate's ownership. One area to the west has been excluded because of its visual separation from the main features in the valley, as has land to the northeast, which is obscured from general views by two ridges.
- 3.3 The land use has changed little in the last 100 years; however, the estate has succumbed to the demand for the division of buildings into multiple residential units. Amington Hall has been subdivided into a number of flats and its rather unexpected-looking rear wing has been converted into four dwellings. Two bungalows have also been built on the entrance drive to the Hall.
- 3.4 Amington Old Hall is subject to various on-going refurbishment works, and neighbouring barns and outbuildings have been converted into residential accommodation. However, overall the site still retains the feeling of a working farm with its large brick and steel-framed farm buildings still in use.
- 3.5 The estate is characterised by its openness and distant views to Tamworth and beyond. The gently sloping land falls into a valley through which the River Anker flows. From vantage points by the river the fields to the north are hidden behind a ridge.

4.0 Summary History of the Area

Historic Ordnance Survey mapping is included at Appendix 1

- 4.1 Amington, formerly a distinct village, is now a suburb of Tamworth. Amington is an ancient settlement and is recorded in the Domesday book as 'Ermendone'. Archaeological research in 1965 following the discovery of crop marks near Amington Old Hall led to the discovery of the remains of a deserted medieval village.
- 4.2 In 1246 Amington and Tamworth were in the King's ancient demesne until its transfer to the Earl of Warwick. Hugh son of Richard of Hatton held the manor in the first half of the 12th century. The manor passed down through the family until through marriage it passed to the de Clinton family. It was the object of a series of settlements by members of the family during the next 200 years. In 1422 one third of the manor was conveyed to the Repington family. The whole manor was finally transferred to the Repington family in 1538 and was still in their hands in the early 20th century.
- 4.3 The current landscape was created primarily from the 16th century onwards when Amington Old Hall was erected as a large timber-framed baffle-entry dwelling. The kitchen is all that survives of the late 16th-century house, after it was largely rebuilt in the 18th century.
- 4.4 The manor continued to be in the hands of the Repington family until the death of Charles Edward Repington in 1837 when it was left to his cousin Edward Henry à Court. By the early 19th century (c.1810) Amington Hall had been built as the palatial residence of the Repington family. A number of landscape features were created including two fox coverts, a duck decoy and formal parkland. In 1925 the manor passed to Mrs. Sydney Fisher.
- 4.5 Much of the Amington Hall estate still retains evidence of its original field boundaries. These fields, with their historic names, still serve as agricultural land for the farm centred at Amington Old Hall.

- 4.6 The 1884 Ordnance Survey (O.S.) map shows the estate with many features which survive today. Amington Hall is shown surrounded by trees with numerous outbuildings in a line north of the main house. The very large walled garden behind the house is a prominent feature and is shown laid out with trees and paths and served by a garden shed and large glasshouse on its southern wall.
- 4.7 Amington Old Hall, located southeast of the later Hall, is shown with a courtyard of buildings to its front and a series of ponds constructed in a 'C' plan to the east of the house, separated by an orchard. The River Anker flows immediately to the south of the Old Hall.
- 4.8 Other buildings on the estate include Ling Cottage west of Amington Hall (probably a tenant's or stockman's cottage), Amington Hall Lodge on Ashby Road, and two neighbouring lodge cottages and a cow barn and decoy barn to the east of the estate. A large woodland plantation, 'The Decoy', marks the eastern extremity of the present estate. The whole estate, even in 1884, is dissected by numerous footpaths and tracks.
- 4.9 The 1931-35 Land Use Map shows the area primarily as grassland with a large pocket of arable land to the east and rough pasture on the banks of the River Anker.

5.0 Appraisal

5.1 Amington Old Hall

General Character, Spaces, Views and Uses

- 5.1.1 The area around the Old Hall has the feeling of a working farm. It is accessed off the main sweeping driveway (with two cattle grids) which runs through the fields and parkland from the Ashby Road. Views across the estate from the west are dominated by the modern large brick and steel-framed farm buildings with asbestos and tin roof coverings. The presence of stock fencing, tubular steel gates and farm machinery strengthen the agricultural character of the site. The Old Hall, an interesting house which has evolved architecturally over the centuries, still retains much of its identity and is separated from the other developments in the farmyard by its own front and back gardens.



The working farm maintains the area's agricultural character

- 5.1.2 The courtyard of former outbuildings southwest of the Old Hall has been converted into modern residential use. The buildings have retained their features and the courtyard space is still easily recognisable. Nevertheless the modern dark-stained window frames, insertion of French windows, well-kept green lawns, stone effect urns, Victorian style outdoor lights, dwarf conifers, gravel driveways and obligatory car ports have somewhat undermined the courtyard's original character. In this sense the conversion lacks some integrity.



The converted farm buildings

- 5.1.3 The farmyard has retained few of its boundary hedges; the hedge east of the Old Hall is an exception. A wooden post and rail fence, which continues down the driveway, marks the yard off from the river and fields to the south. Numerous mature trees including old oaks and younger poplars can be seen in views across the farmyard. The area southeast of the Old Hall has a more agricultural character, with an undeveloped outbuilding and broken road surface. The extent of the yard is defined by three large tubular steel farm gates.

Architectural Quality of Buildings and Building Materials/Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings

- 5.1.4 The Grade II listed Old Hall formed the original focus of this historic estate. It was built in the 16th century as a timber-framed, baffle entry house. It has undergone many alterations; the majority of the walls are of 18th-century brickwork, the thick southeast wall having two 18th-century windows. The entrance in the projecting northwest wing has a more ancient nail-studded door. The narrow extension northeastwards has modern windows but, from the traces of blocked openings in the walls, appears to have been a former outbuilding now converted to residential purposes. The Old Hall is clearly at the heart of this area of the estate, and its various additions and alterations add to the understanding of the history and development of the estate and the fortunes of its owners.



Amington Old Hall

- 5.1.5 The associated farm buildings, now converted into residential use, are much later than the original house. The red brick former barns, cart sheds, and dairy, many with prominent gable ends, were modest functional buildings. Their conversion, although superficially in keeping, has not been of the highest quality. The later (but still historic) dark brick extension to the long range attached to the Old Hall is of a different character to the more mellow building materials used elsewhere.

Negative Features

- 5.1.6 The modern farm buildings to the west of the Old Hall are not aesthetically attractive but represent the need for modernisation in agriculture and maintain the integrity of the working farm. The conversion of the farm's older outbuildings is a sign of the necessary diversification faced by many farms in order to increase income.
- 5.1.7 The dark-stained window frames of all of the buildings are an unattractive feature. The small low range which forms the southern side of the courtyard has a rendered southern elevation which together with its dark window frames and French windows creates a particularly unsympathetic ensemble. The small manicured gardens in front of the properties with ornamental statuary have the character of a suburban residential area not a rural estate.



The well maintained gardens are unfortunately out of character with the historic farmstead

5.1.8 In more general terms, the impact of overhead wiring can be clearly seen in most views within the conservation area.

General Condition and Capacity for Change

5.1.9 Generally the area is attractive and well maintained. Fortunately it retains the character of a working farm on which the estate and parkland was based. There is, however, an opportunity to strengthen the quality of the conservation area by the use of appropriate and sympathetic building materials.

5.1.10 The restoration of the system of medieval fishponds, east of the Old Hall, may further enhance this part of the conservation area and add to its historic interest.

5.2 Amington Hall

General Character, Spaces, Views and Uses

5.2.1 Amington Hall was built in c.1810 as the Repington family home. This grand classical style house, surrounded by trees, stands in its own distinct area within the larger conservation area. The long tree-lined drive from the lodge on Ashby Road down to the house, taking in views of the landscaped parkland to the front of the house, is an important element of the estate. Surprisingly, however, on approaching the house the viewer is first struck not just by the Grade II* listed house but by two rather incongruous bungalows complete with tarmac driveways, front lawns and conifers. Fortunately the house itself is some distance away but even so it does not stand in splendid isolation. A painted brick rear range, now four homes and reminiscent of a row of terraced cottages sits somewhat uncomfortably behind the grand formal façade of the Hall but has visual interest.



View to the house from the parkland

5.2.2 The rear grounds of the Hall are somewhat neglected. The red brick outbuildings to the north of the Hall are dilapidated, their walls undermined by trees and other vegetation. The large walled garden is now covered in brambles and weeds, and parts of its high brick boundary wall have collapsed or been removed.

Architectural Quality of Buildings and Building Materials/Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings

5.2.3 The Grade II* listed Hall is at the centre of this area and can be seen in distant views between the trees in the parkland. This grand ashlar faced house deserves its II* listing. It is an attractive focus of the Amington Hall Estate and the conservation area with its central bay breaking forward under a pediment, bowed porch entrance with Tuscan aedicule and paired 2-panel doors with flanking windows displaying the Repington family crest.



Grade II* listed Amington Hall

5.2.4 The brick-built rear wing, now converted into four houses, is an unusual accompaniment to the main house. Nevertheless the white painted houses with plain slate roof and three-over-three sashes are attractive and make their own contribution to the conservation area. A flat roofed garage to the north is, however, an unfortunate addition.



The brick-built wing

- 5.2.5 The simple red brick outbuildings north of the Hall are in a precarious state. They have few architectural details of note but with their slate roofs and arched window and door openings they have some character. Their renovation would benefit the surrounding area.



The outbuildings in need of attention

Negative Features

- 5.2.6 The two bungalows situated off the main drive to the Hall are completely out of character with not only the Hall but the whole estate. The same is true of the three garages to the front of the Hall which have a negative impact on the setting of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.2.7 The sorry condition of the large walled garden behind the house is regrettable, and this substantial feature of the house and grounds will only deteriorate further if remedial work is not undertaken in the near future.

General Condition and Capacity for Change

- 5.2.8 The grounds immediately surrounding the Hall are well maintained. However, the land to the rear incorporating the disused walled garden and many specimen trees (yews, variegated hollies etc.) is overgrown and the conservation area would benefit from its renovation and continued management.

5.2.9 The red brick outbuildings will collapse entirely if left to deteriorate further. While it may be uneconomical to restore these buildings, for which it may be difficult to identify a new use, their renovation should be considered. Likewise, the restoration and ongoing maintenance of the walled garden would have a clear positive impact on the setting of the listed building and on the character and appearance of the conservation area.



The overgrown walled garden in need of renovation

5.3 The Parkland

General Character, Spaces, Views and Uses

- 5.3.1 The parkland covers just over 106 hectares. It is made up of approximately 17 hectares of rough grazing land with remaining parkland trees in the area between Amington Hall, Amington Old Hall and Ling Cottage; the rest is under cultivation or wooded. The Decoy is a significant landscape feature which forms approximately 2 hectares of woodland. A large pond, the remains of a system of medieval fishponds, is situated northeast of the Old Hall and a relatively new wooded plantation, lined with poplar trees, covers the other section of ponds east of the Old Hall. The River Anker, bridged at numerous points, runs along the south of the estate.
- 5.3.2 The estate's land is characterised by its gently sloping fields of red soil to the north and wide floodplain to the south. Trees are a prominent feature in the landscape with many small mixed woodland plantations. A number of old parkland trees survive and act as important visual and historical landmarks in the conservation area. There are distant views south, southeast and southwest to the surrounding settlements and countryside. Views to Tamworth take in St. Editha's Church and (unfortunately but inevitably) the town's large tower blocks and the Snowdome.



Views over the parkland

- 5.3.3 Several important historic boundaries remain and are marked variously by hawthorn and blackthorn hedges, ditches and culverts and old metal parkland railings.

Architectural Quality of Buildings and Building Materials/Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings

- 5.3.4 Ling Cottage, situated west of Amington Hall, stands in its own grounds within the estate. The cottage, presumably previously an estate worker's cottage, is a well proportioned building of understated design. It is an attractive addition to the estate and an important counter to the grand Hall and Old Hall farmhouse. The modern steel-framed agricultural building next to the cottage is softened by surrounding trees and shrubs and its painted green frontage.



Ling Cottage

5.3.5 The early 20th-century Amington Old Hall Cottages are located on the side of Ashby Road, at the top of the long driveway which leads to the Old Hall. This pair of semi-detached cottages, a very much later addition to the edge of the estate, stands outside the conservation area, but nonetheless the houses are important markers of the driveway down to the Old Hall.

5.3.6 Amington Hall Lodge is also located on the side of Ashby Road, at the start of the entrance driveway down to the 19th-century Hall. Today's lodge is a modern building, replacing an earlier lodge on the same site, and is out of character with the original estate buildings, being more suburban in appearance than rural estate. As such, it is a poor roadside marker for the estate.



Amington Hall Lodge

- 5.3.7 The late 19th-century Amington Hall Cottages are situated to the east of the Lodge. This pair of semi-detached, partly rendered, brick-built cottages have some interesting features such as the half dormers and massive central chimney stack but have suffered from unsympathetic replacement uPVC windows and doors. The cottages are served by large productive vegetable gardens complete with many glasshouses. To the south of the cottages is a 1950s red brick bungalow, one of a number of later, out-of-character additions to the estate.



Amington Hall Cottages and Bungalow

Negative Features

- 5.3.8 The loss of a large extent of historic parkland is unfortunate, but the continued agricultural use of the land is important in keeping the estate farm a viable enterprise.
- 5.3.9 The later building developments on the estate, such as Amington Hall Lodge and the nearby bungalow, are unfortunately out of character with the estate and do not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

General Condition and Capacity for Change

- 5.3.10 The estate is well maintained and its continued existence in largely unspoilt form preserves an important part of the countryside so close to Tamworth.
- 5.3.11 There may be future possibility of reintroducing more native parkland trees to be protected with cattle guards, and the replanting and maintenance of hedgerows. It is

important that small landscape features such as isolated 'islands' of trees within fields are also retained.

5.3.12 There is little scope for any further housing development on the estate. Continued erosion of the character of the estate through the introduction of new housing will degrade the character and appearance of the conservation area.



General views across the conservation area

6.0 Proposed Boundary Amendments, Recommendations for Listing and Article 4 Directions

- 6.1 No changes are proposed to the conservation area boundary. The boundary, drawn along the lines of the 1927 estate boundary, remains appropriate. There is nothing visually to differentiate much of the open farmland from what is and what is not included, but the historical boundary of the estate must take precedence.
- 6.2 No buildings are recommended for inclusion on either the statutory or the local list.
- 6.3 Under Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, a general planning permission is granted for a range of minor developments. These 'permitted development' rights are more restricted in conservation areas for certain types of development, including the addition of dormer windows, some types of cladding, the erection of satellite dishes fronting a highway, and the reduction in size of permitted extensions.
- 6.4 Articles 4(1) and 4(2) of the Order enable local planning authorities to make certain directions withdrawing permitted development rights. Article 4(1) directions apply to any type of land or building but need to be approved by the First Secretary of State. Article 4(2) directions may be used to withdraw permitted development rights for a prescribed range of development which materially affects aspects of the external appearance of dwelling houses in conservation areas. The removal or alteration of a particular type of architectural feature important to the character and appearance of the conservation area, such as distinctive windows, gates and boundary walls, can be specified in the direction.
- 6.5 Local authorities should notify local people and take account of public views before deciding whether to confirm an Article 4(2) direction.
- 6.6 Article 4 directions applying to features like doors, windows, porches and roof coverings work best in areas of strongly-defined (and well-preserved) architectural character.

6.7 It is not considered appropriate to serve an Article 4 direction on any part of the Amington Hall Conservation Area.

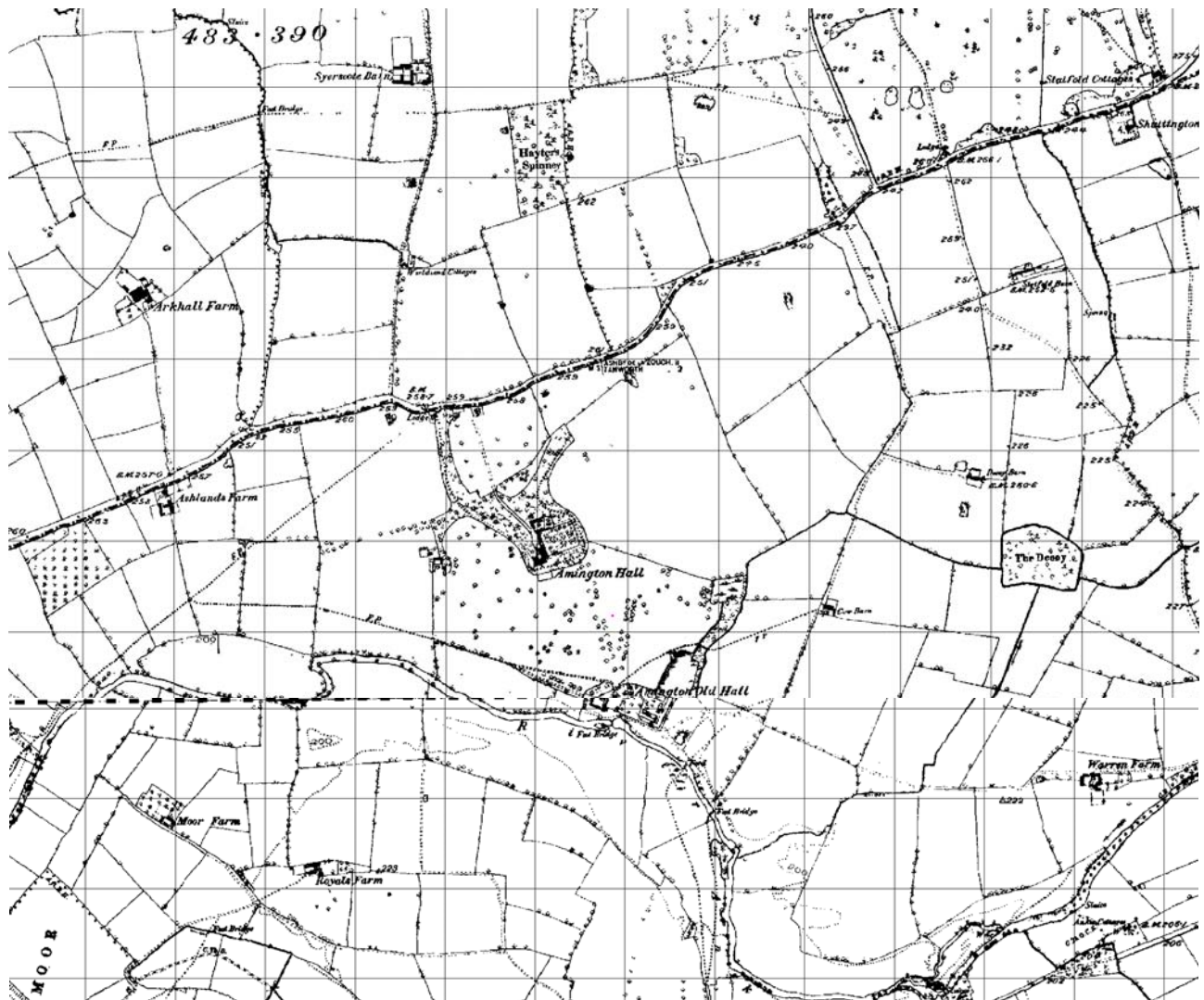
7.0 Monitoring and Revision

- 7.1 As recommended by English Heritage in its 2006 publication, *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*, it is essential to monitor the conservation area and to review the published character appraisal on a regular basis.
- 7.2 Changes to the conservation area may occur through the implementation of schemes approved by the Council, such as new development or changes to the public realm, or through both permitted and unauthorised alterations. General deterioration or changes to the condition of the area's physical fabric may also occur over time.
- 7.3 A dated photographic record of the conservation area has been created during the production of this character appraisal. The main aim of this is to provide a baseline for measuring change in the appearance of the conservation area and for monitoring the physical condition of its buildings. The record can also be used as an aid to any enforcement action should unauthorised alterations be carried out. In order to take enforcement action on unlisted buildings the unauthorised alteration must be shown to have been carried out within the last four years, so for these purposes it is important to ensure that the photographic record is updated on a regular five-year cycle.
- 7.4 In the case of listed buildings too, where there is no time limit on when enforcement action can be taken (provided of course that the unauthorised works were undertaken after listing took place), regular updating of the photographic record is equally important, not just as a record of change but as possible evidence in enforcement or prosecution cases.
- 7.5 If appropriate, local community awareness of the conservation area may be maintained by engaging their assistance in the updating of the photographic record. This might be achieved through the use of volunteers from local historical or amenity societies or even groups of schoolchildren or students. Information could be stored on electronic 'pro formas' which show dated 'then and now' photographs to illustrate where change has occurred. These could be added to every five years with each phase of review.

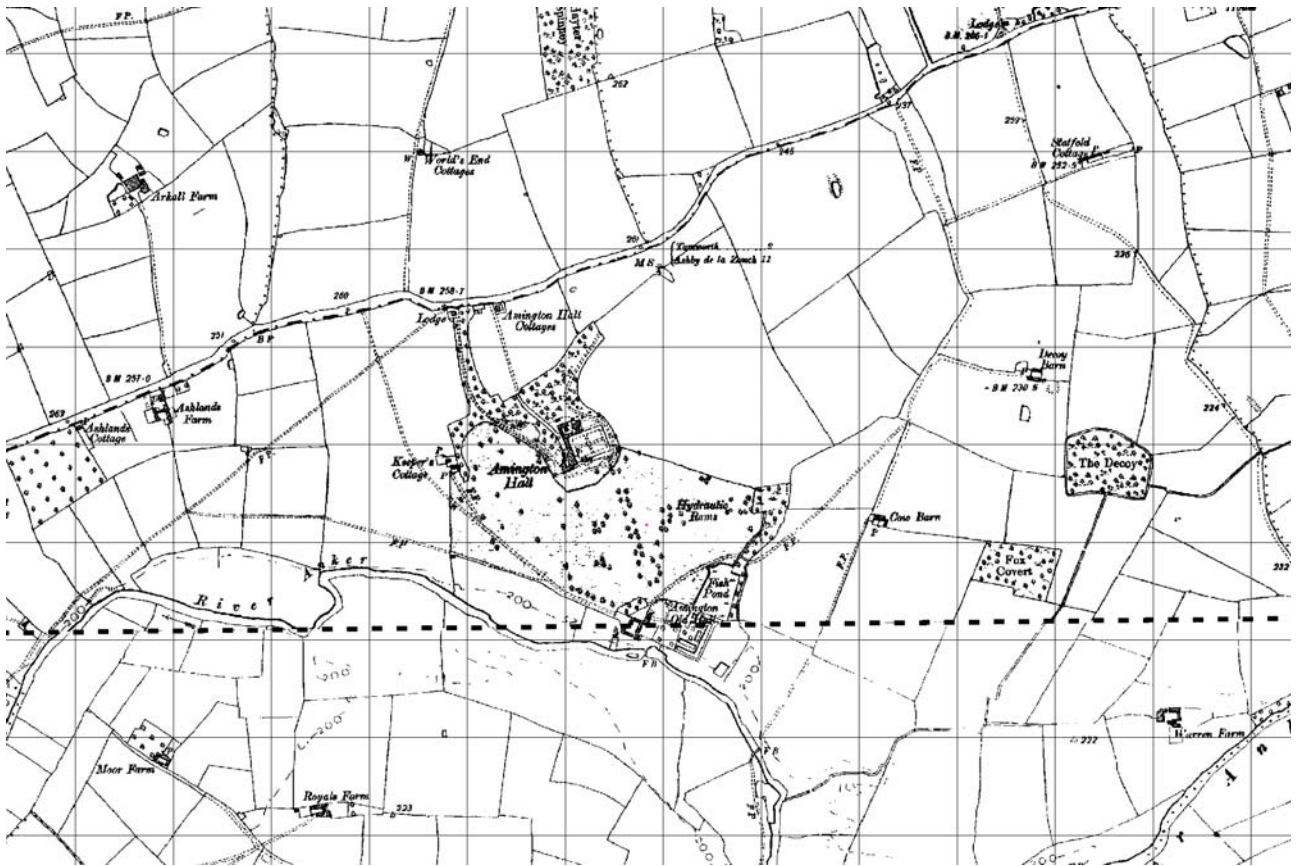
- 7.6 English Heritage (2006) recommends that a 'virtuous circle' of monitoring, review and action should be established in order to maintain a sustainable equilibrium. Ideally, a five-year cycle of review should be established. With the aid of an updated photographic record, a review of the conservation area in five years' time (2012) to establish what has changed (and why) since this character appraisal was produced will enable it to be updated.
- 7.7 Importantly, such a review will also allow an assessment of the effectiveness of the Council's current conservation area policy and a measurement of how successful the Council has been at implementing the recommendations for enhancement made in the character appraisal. The reasons for success or non-success can then be appraised and policies modified or specific actions proposed as appropriate. The rate and nature of change identified may also indicate whether it would be desirable to produce 'Design Guides' providing guidance on topics such as extensions and alterations to historic buildings and development proposals.
- 7.8 The review may also lead to further alterations to the conservation area boundary, either to bring new areas into the conservation area or remove areas from it that no longer contribute to or reinforce its character and appearance.
- 7.9 The review may either result in a thorough overhaul and updating of the existing character appraisal and production of a new version, or could take the form of an addendum to the existing document, which focuses specifically on changes that have occurred over the last five years, what effect these changes have had on the character and appearance of the conservation area, and updated recommendations for enhancement.

Appendix 1:

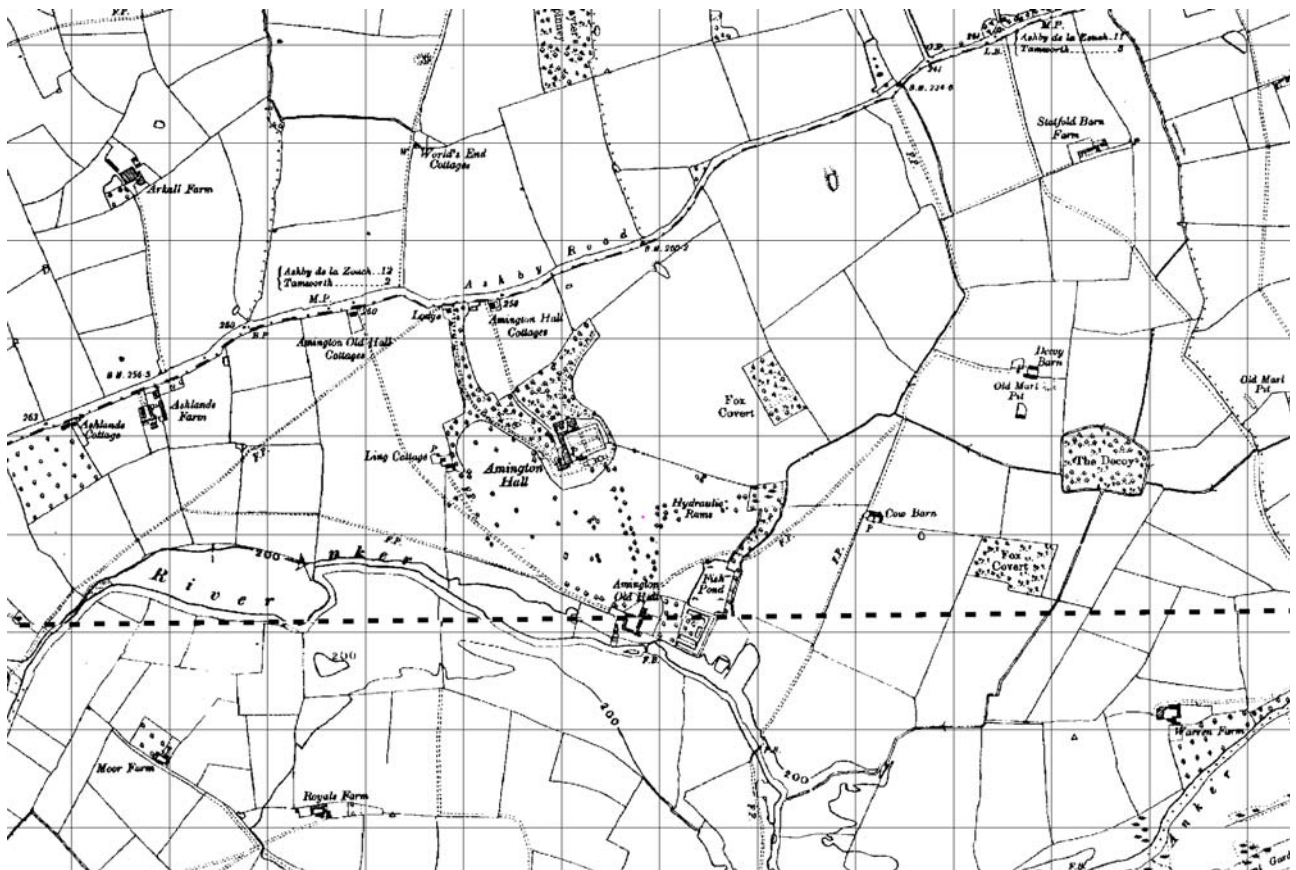
Historic Ordnance Survey Mapping



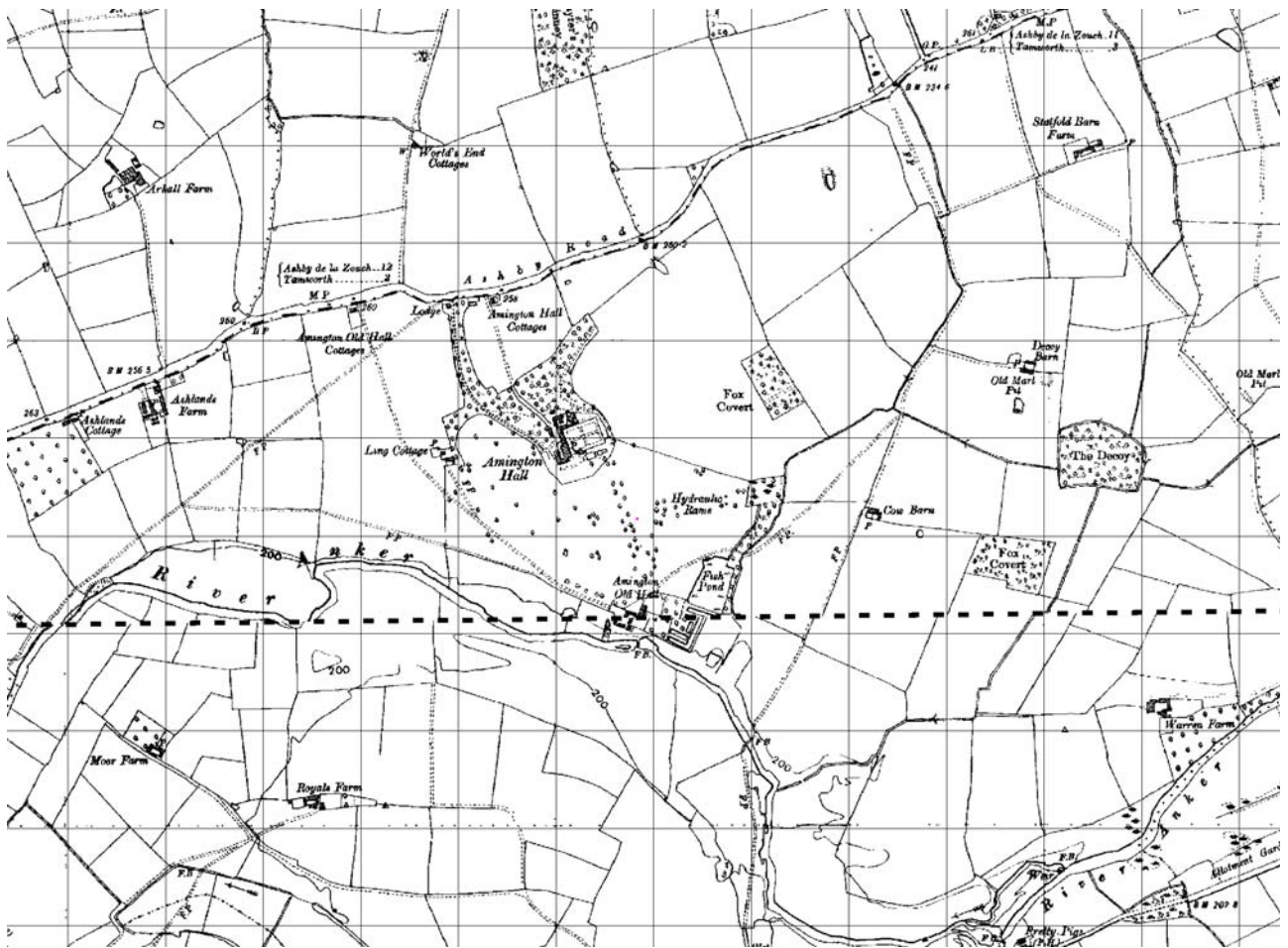
1888



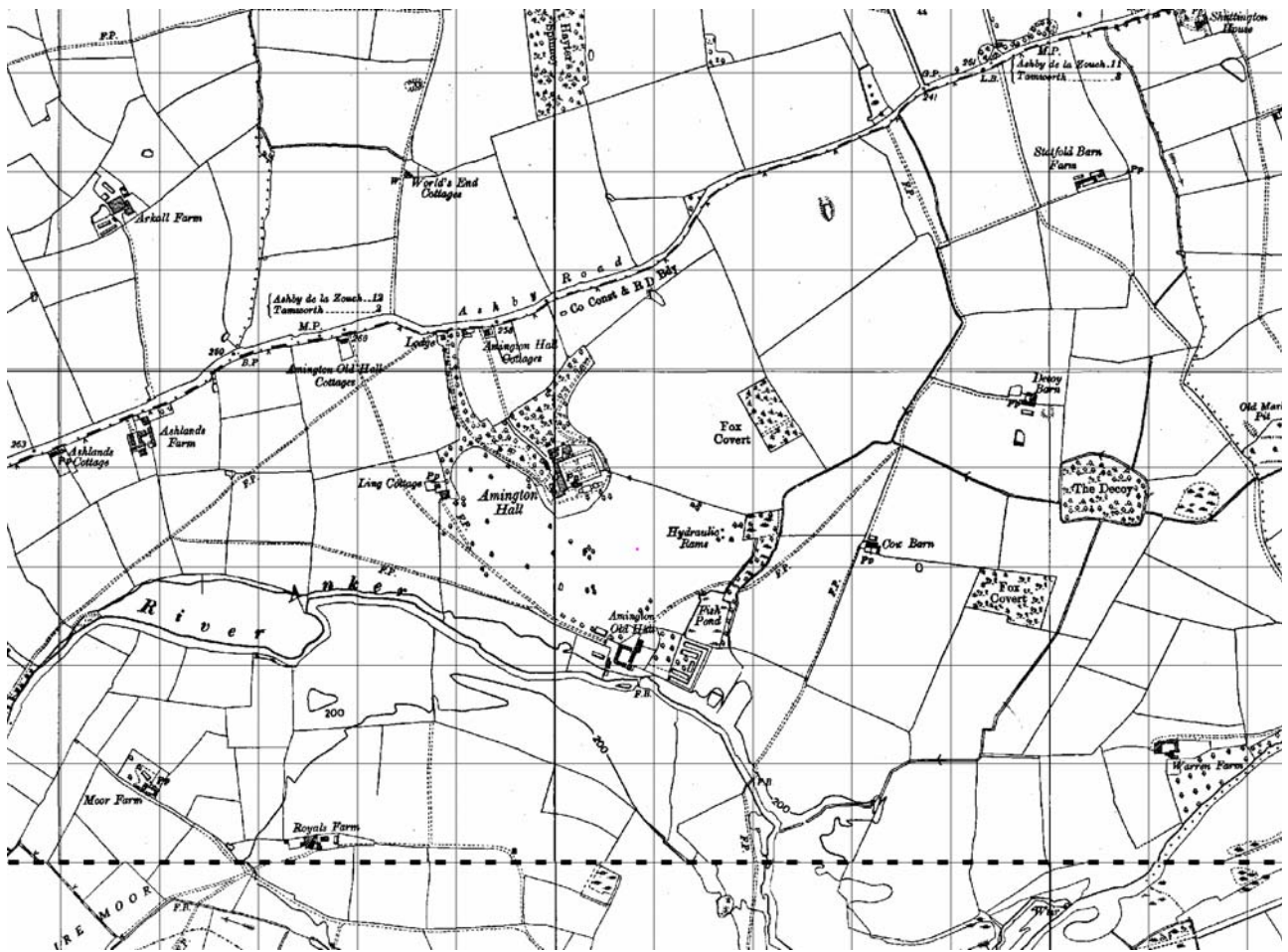
1903



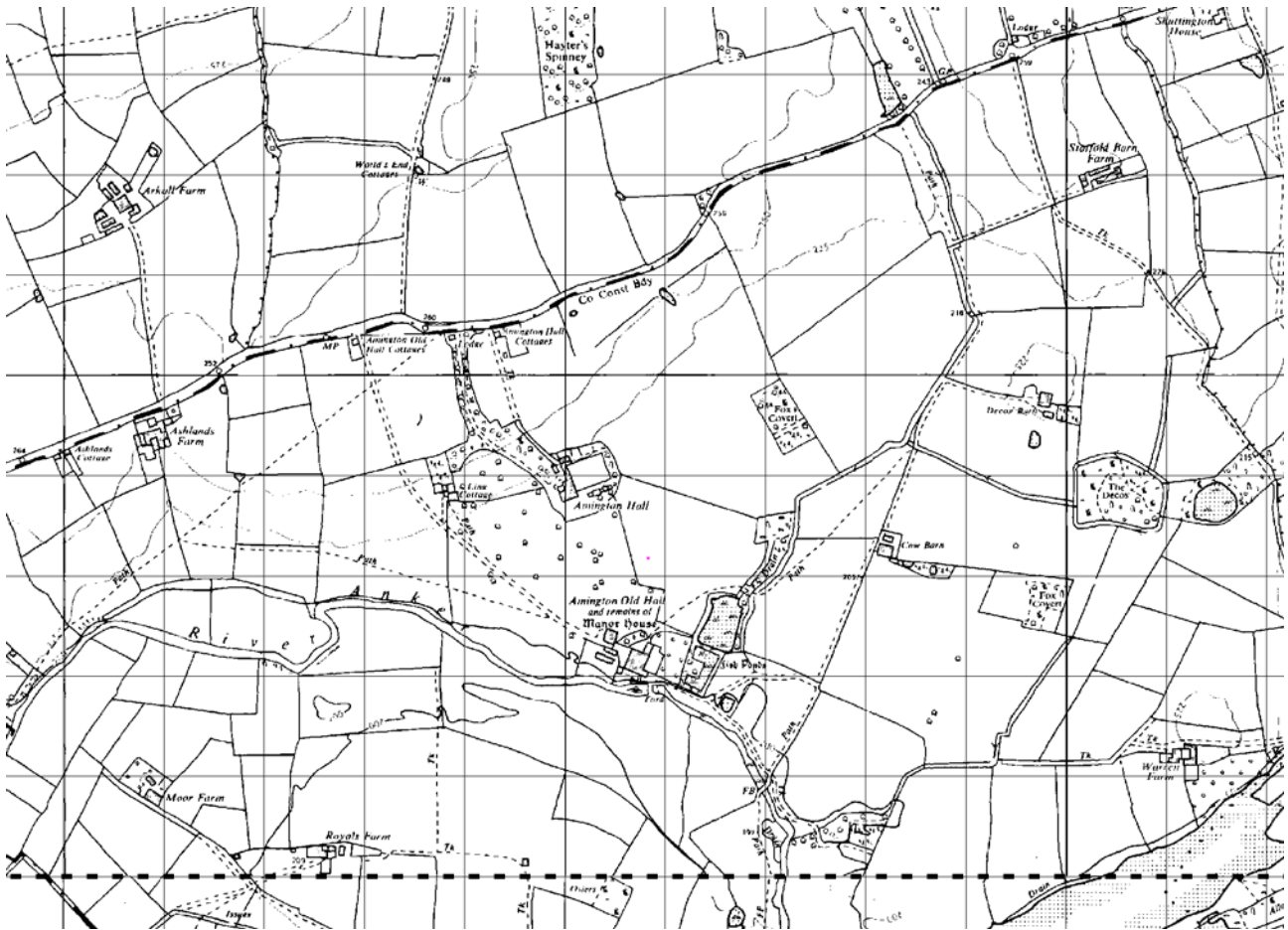
1924



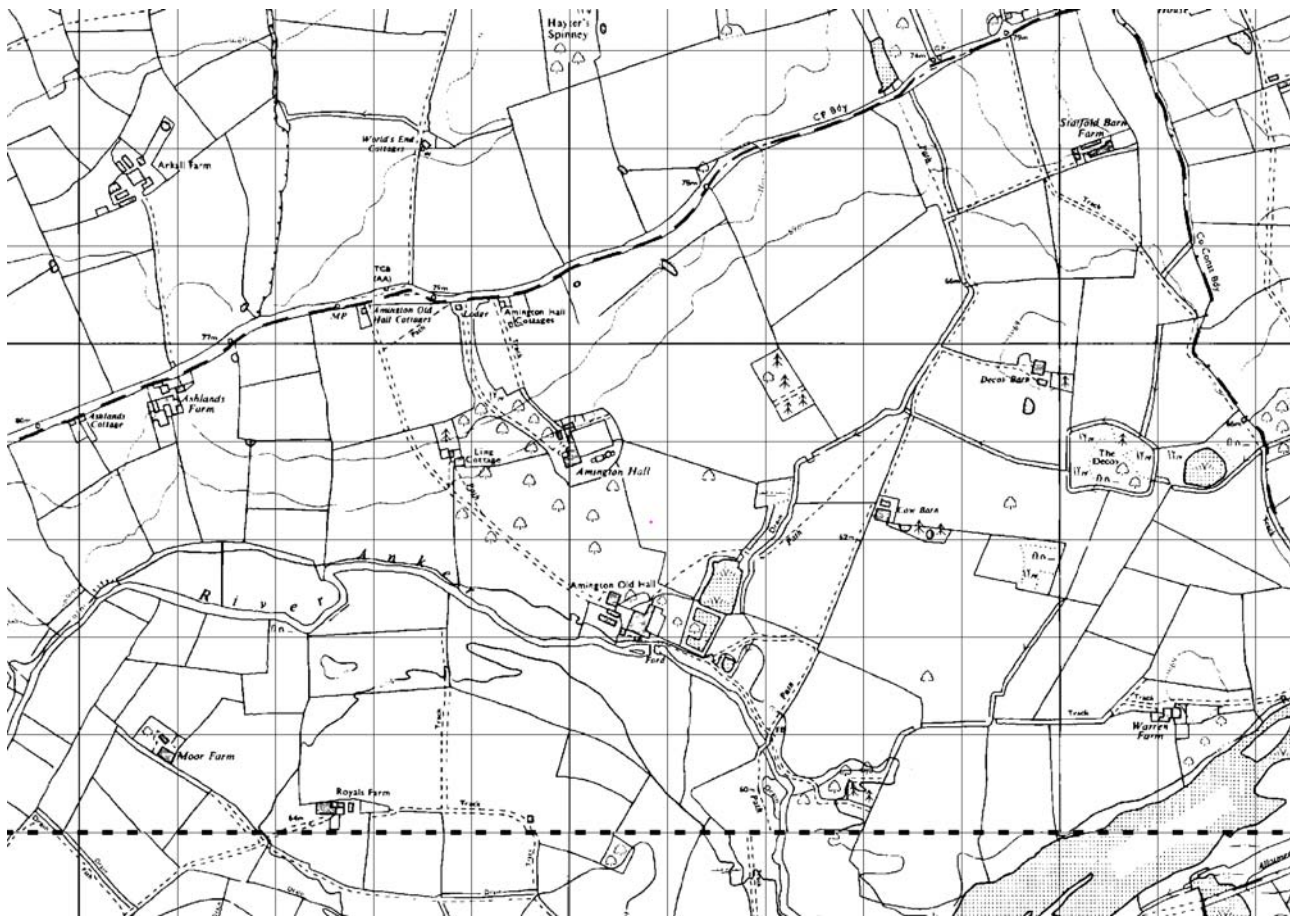
1938



1955



1966



1978



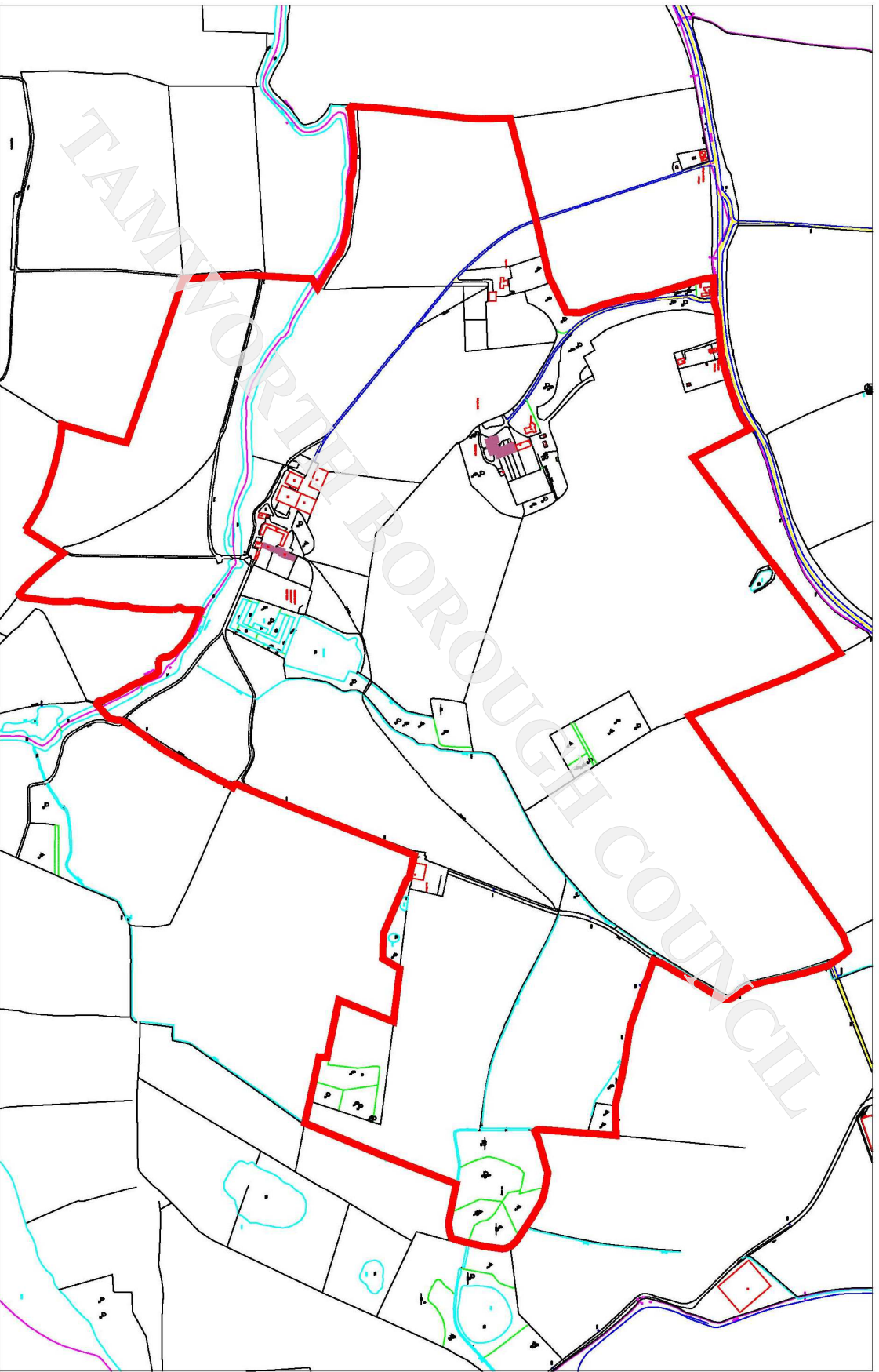
1999

Appendix 2:

Plan 1: Existing Designations

Plan 2: Proposals and Recommendations

AMINGTON HALL CONSERVATION AREA: Existing Designations



Conservation Area Boundary

Listed Building

AMINGTON HALL CONSERVATION AREA: Proposals and Recommendations

