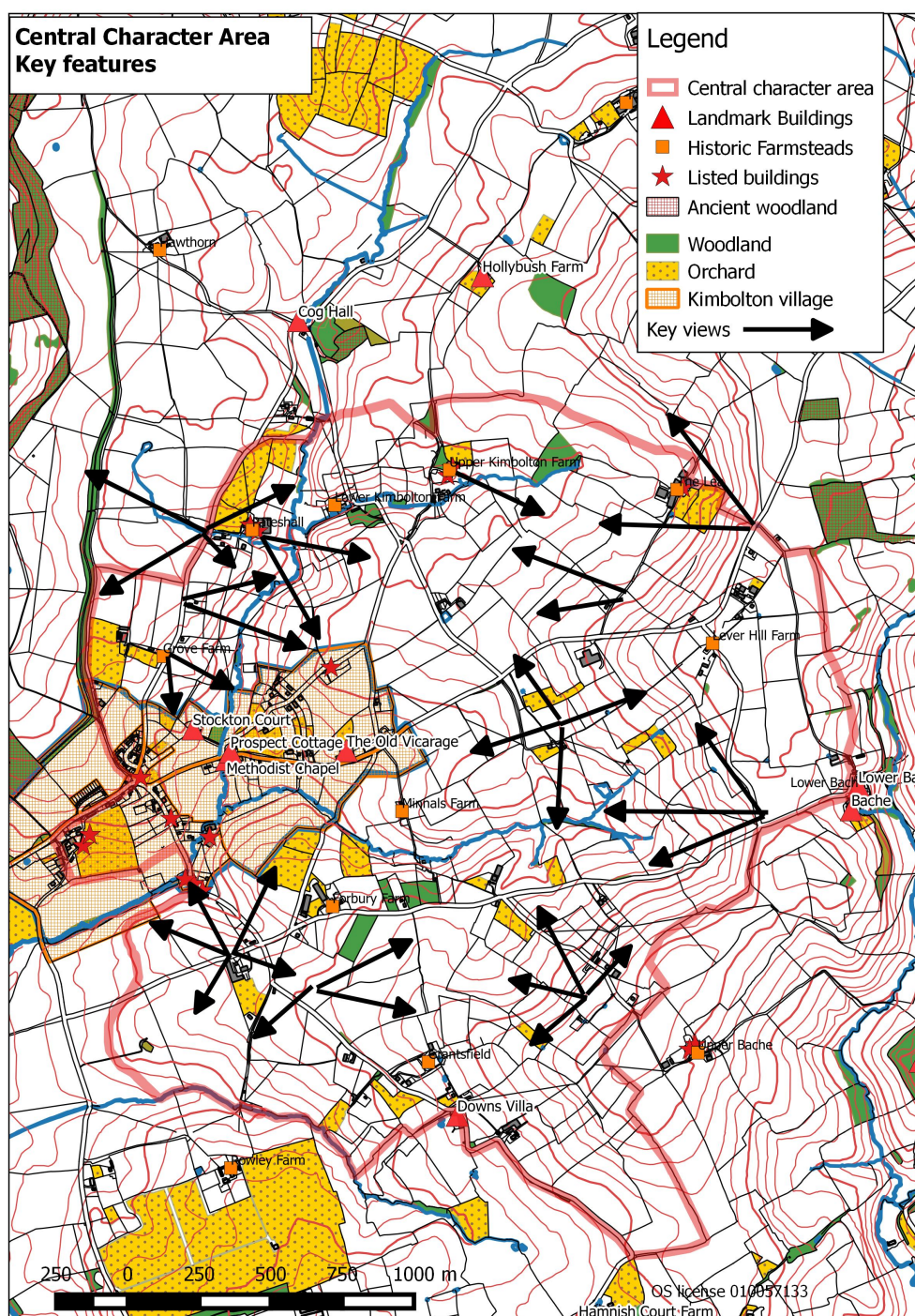


4.2 Central Rural Character Area

4.2.1 This is the largest of the rural character areas, making up the majority of the central part of the Parish, encircling the majority of Kimbolton village to the west and stretching northwards to the Hundred, the Bache to the east and Hamnish to the south. It is part of the Bromyard plateau sub-regional character area; and is wholly classified as being Timbered Plateau Farmland landscape character type.

Map 7 – Central Character Area



4.2.2 Topography & landform



Image 13 – the view west from Lever Hill showing the central ‘bowl’ of the Parish centre-right nestled in the arc of hills with Long Wood in the distance

4.2.3 A varied landscape of gently sloping hills generally aligned in an arc running north to south, with the highest being in the east at Lever Hill. The ridge continues in a sinuous shape southwards to Gorsty Hill. This ridge line is visible from practically the whole of the character area and much of the Parish; the exceptions being very low-lying parts such as Lower Kimbolton Farm. To the north-west of Kimbolton is a small outlier that falls gradually to the area’s lowest point at Cogwell Brook.



image 14 – the view from Grove Farm with Kimbolton Church visible centre-left, and the wooded Cogwell Brook valley to the left of the prominent tree centre

4.2.4 Flowing from east to west are two brooks: the Yolk and Whittey, both of which rise in the parish. Descending from fairly high ground to low in a winding route, they have cut for themselves steeply incised banks. The Whittey forms part of the southern limit of the Central Rural Area. The Cogwell Brook begins life a short distance outside the parish, entering to the north and meandering generally in a southerly direction. By the time it leaves Kimbolton – and because it is a longer brook having several tributaries and drains feeding it – it has cut deeply into the ground with consequent very steep banks.

4.2.5 Land uses

4.2.6 Modern land use consists of rotational arable use, which has encompassed cereals, oilseeds, potatoes and grass leys, noting that the large area of commercial orchard also previously enjoyed such use. This is clearly interspersed with smaller areas of pasture fields and traditional orchard frequently associated with residential dwellings including remnant orchards.

4.2.7 Land use is a patchwork of mixed farming with extensive areas of pasture. Woodland is limited to a small number of copses and streamside corridors in the valley bottoms. There is extensive tree coverage within the network of hedgerows.



Image 15 – view from near the Lea showing the typical treed landscape of hedgerows and oak trees.

4.2.8 There are still many small fields, though there is a tendency for larger fields to be formed from these to accommodate modern farming requirements. Evidence that this has taken place can be seen by the isolated trees – often oak – in the surrounding ploughed land. Occasionally there is a dead specimen where cultivation has disturbed its roots and hastened its end. The series of small, irregular and often narrow fields between Grantsfield, Downs Farm and the Whittey Brook appears to reflect old ‘furlongs’. In the corner of several fields are veteran pollard oaks which might have marked ownership boundaries. One boundary marks the ancient pale of the deer park.

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- 4.2.9 There are traditional orchards producing fruit; some are extensive, e.g. Pateshall Farm. At the time of the survey the trees were heavily laden with apples almost ready for harvesting and despatching to either Westons or Bulmers for cider making. Mixed farming is carried out here – most are arable and pasture; many have sheep and/or cattle.
- 4.2.10 Roads, streets, routes
- 4.2.11 The A4112 Kimbolton to Tenbury road is the principal route, travelling in an easterly direction. South and almost parallel with this is a lane from Lower Bache Farm to just beyond Forbury Farm. Both routes have smaller lanes from them in roughly northerly and southerly directions. Apart from the 'A' road, they are narrow, twisting routes; many are banked, sunken ways lined with mature trees in mixed hedges. Criss-crossing the fields are many footpaths and some tracks.
- 4.2.12 Historic features
- 4.2.13 The area contains a number of historic features which provide evidence of settlement across a wide range of eras.
- 4.2.14 On the 1804 Ordnance Survey Map (OS) from approximately level with Bonaventure to Rowley's Barn a track is shown and from there to the crossroads at Stockton it is drawn as a road. By 1983 this track had been identified as a Roman road by the Leominster Survey carried out for Herefordshire Council. In 2013 a hoard of Roman coins was found on the Stockton Bury Estate.
- 4.2.15 In 2006, Herefordshire Archaeology undertook a Whole Farm Survey, one of which was Perry Wood. A lynchet was identified at Far Slings Meadow, dating to the medieval period. Post-Medieval features were ridge and furrow. Evidence was found in several fields (horse ploughing, not oxen) and all the field boundaries are of this period. There were a number of quarries, some filled-in but recognisable.
- 4.2.16 Shown on the Landplan OS map of 1999 are two weirs on the Cogwell Brook. One is south of the confluence of this brook with the one flowing past Kimbolton Court. The second is on a line almost parallel with Grove Farm. Weirs are associated with water mills. Another weir – not shown on a map – has been identified at the bridge at the end of the footpath running alongside Cogwell Brook. Dr. Keith Ray (formerly Archaeologist for Herefordshire) led a field walk in September 2013, during which he suggested there had been a two-stage mill at Lower Kimbolton. At the approach to Kimbolton Court is a ford.
- 4.2.17 Consulting the 1841 Tithe Map for Kimbolton revealed the remaining strip fields that originally were part of the Medieval Three-Field system – Sweet Apple, Grantsfield and Rowley Fields. (M. Raven 'A Guide to Herefordshire, 1996, page 90)
- 4.2.18 For about 12 years, starting in 1686, Sampson Lloyd worked Sibbel Good's farm at the Lea in Kimbolton. Sampson's son and grandson were partners in the bank of Taylor and Lloyds which eventually became the Lloyds Bank of today.
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4.2.19 Settlement pattern and buildings

4.2.20 The area has a predominantly dispersed settlement pattern made up of farmsteads and free-standing dwelling houses.

4.2.21 Surrounding the village are isolated farmsteads interspersed with occasional cottages and a few modern homes. A number are identified as historic farmsteads:

- Kimbolton Court
- Grove Farm
- Forbury Farm
- Grantsfield
- Mennals Farm
- Lever Hill
- Lower Kimbolton Farm
- The Lea
- Upper Kimbolton
- Pateshall

4.2.22 Of these farmsteads, the majority have retained their traditional outbuildings – only those at Kimbolton Court having being converted to dwellings.

4.2.23 To the north of the area are the two significant listed farmsteads: **Pateshall and Upper Kimbolton**.



Image 16 – Pateshall

4.2.24 Pateshall is a south-facing, seventeenth century, five-gabled and stone built house. There are some later additions. Each gable window has been blocked-up. The roof is of slate. The farmstead has a very large, seven-bay, stone barn dating from 1784. It has two threshing doors, triangular ventilation openings on either side of them and a corrugated steel roof. This building is also listed. There is a cruck barn here, too.



Image 17 – Upper Kimbolton Farmhouse

4.2.25 **Upper Kimbolton Farmhouse** is timber-framed, in-filled with brick or wattle-and-daub. It has two storeys with attics and was built in the sixteenth century; then additions and alterations were made during subsequent centuries. The roof is of clay tiles. The earlier two-bay cross-wing has a stone plinth. Adjoining it is a three-bay later wing. Originally the cross-wing was a granary and has a sack hatch remaining in the kitchen ceiling.



Image 18 – interior of the Cruck Barn, Upper Kimbolton Farm

4.2.26 Across the yard is a fifteenth – or very early sixteenth – century magnificent two-bay cruck barn with later additions at each end. The timbers forming the cruck blades are enormous, still have their spurs and yokes, though some of the tie-beams have been modified. There is a small area of wattle remaining on one of the walls. The exterior is modern weather boarding with a corrugated steel roof.



Image 19 – The Lea. Showing the chimney stack to the left of the farmhouse

4.2.27 Slightly south and east of these is the third listed farmstead – **the Lea**. This is probably the oldest dwelling in the parish, was originally timber-framed but encased in stone in the eighteenth century. It has a splendid chimney – probably Tudor – for the kitchen.



image 20 – Lower Kimbolton farmhouse

4.2.28 **Lower Kimbolton Farmhouse** is another substantial stone and timber-framed building and has a slate roof. One side of the property is rendered.



Image 21 – New House Farm

4.2.29 **New House Farmhouse** has rendered walls and a slate roof. There is also a hop kiln in the farmyard. Some of the outbuildings have been converted to homes, as have those at Kimbolton Court.



Image 22 – converted barns at New House Farm

4.2.30 Many of the buildings have characteristic stepped chimneys ending with brick stacks. Some also have bread ovens, e.g. Bachefield Farm. Usually slate or clay tiles are used as roofing material but at Grantsfield House one outbuilding has stone tiles for its roof. Many properties are in valleys at the end of a lane, a long way from a main thoroughfare. However, two are in quite the opposite situation, being in exposed positions at the top of a hill.



Image 23 – Lever Hill Farm showing the chimney stack

4.2.31 One is Lever Hill Farmhouse that is built of stone with brick detailing to the windows. The other is Perry Wood Farmhouse. The original farmhouse is next door, being of stone with a slate roof.

4.2.32 Landmarks



Image 24 – the Black Poplar, Gorsty Hill

4.2.33 The Black Poplar tree at Gorsty Hill is of special note.



Image 25 – Kimbolton Church from Pateshall

4.2.34 Kimbolton Church stands like a sentinel. It is surprising from how many places it can be seen in this character area – and not necessarily from higher ground.

4.2.35 Green and natural features

4.2.36 The principal natural features are the extensive network of hedgerows and associated hedgerow trees. Hedgerows are predominantly mixed native species and on the whole are well maintained but with some opportunities for restoration and enhancement.

4.2.37 Oak is the dominant tree, many being very old specimens, with ash a close second. The open countryside is bordered with trees and hedges; there are no significant woods. Shelter belts of trees occur in places e.g. at the edge of Grantsfield orchard.

4.2.38 Some farms retain their ponds e.g. the Lea (which has one small and two very large ones) and New House where there were bulrushes growing and mallard ducks swimming in their pond at the time of the survey.

4.2.39 Views



Image 26 – view from Gorsty Hill

4.2.40 The elevated setting of the area provides a number of far reaching views. Splendid views are to be seen from Lever Hill and Gortsy Hill, for example – both elevated sites. However, there is equally interesting scenery from Grove Farm, Stanley Bank and Grantsfield. In fact there is hardly a site in the area that does not have an attractive view; many are more intimate but just as important and attractive as the wider vistas. The key views are shown on Map 7.

4.2.41 Summary of key defining characteristics / other observations

4.2.42 An agricultural area, with scattered dwellings and farms; many of the latter labelled 'Historic Farmstead' by Herefordshire Council. Three of these are listed properties having significant outbuildings and one, the Lea, with a very interesting historic past.

4.2.43 The area is well provided with routes: either a main road, lanes, footpaths or bridleways. It has three brooks flowing through it and these add charm and a varied ecology.

4.2.44 Attractive rural views to be enjoyed almost everywhere here.

4.2.45 Evidence of the past can be seen in the shape and structure of the hedge network and within fields: ridge-and-furrow, quarry remains, as well as remnants of former orchards; in the Cogwell Brook – weirs; and in farm buildings, hop kilns, threshing barns and stock housing that are no longer in use for their original purpose.

4.2.46 Management guidelines and priorities

4.2.47 The key priorities are:

- Conservation and management of the wooded corridors of the Cogwell Brook, Yolk Brook and Whittey Brook

- Conservation and enhancement of existing hedgerows and trees, particularly landmark prominent oaks including those located in ploughed fields at risk of disturbance.
- Preserve and enhance the character and appearance of traditional historic buildings and farmsteads.
- Conservation and enhancement of traditional orchards
- Maintain the dispersed settlement pattern and resist proposals for prominently located large scale buildings, particularly on the skyline formed by the arc of elevated countryside from inappropriate obtrusive development