



The Parish Church of St Paul  
Church Lane  
Coven  
Wolverhampton  
WV9 5DE

# Parish Profile 2023



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LICHFIELD

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# Parish Church of St Paul, Coven

A parish in the Diocese of Lichfield and under the Pastoral and Episcopal care of the Bishop of Oswestry

## General Information

Address  
St Paul's Church  
Church Lane  
Coven  
Wolverhampton  
WV9 5DE

Church Wardens  
Pauline Appleby  
Bob Bailey

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## Context - Church and Parish

St Paul's Coven was built in 1857. It is in a good state of repair and has recently been reordered and redecorated. It serves the very pleasant semi-rural village community of Coven located in South Staffordshire on the North-West border of Wolverhampton. It currently has a population of 4500 which is expected to increase over the next decade.

We are a stable congregation with 44 on the electoral roll. Average Sunday Mass attendance is rising from 20 (when we reopened after Covid) to 25 today. There is also a midweek Mass on Wednesdays with an average attendance of 9.

A few years ago, the pews were removed and replaced with chairs which allow us the flexibility to hold social events. It is carpeted and there is a sound system with an induction loop. A new central heating system was installed in 2012. The Lady Chapel was renovated and reinstated four years ago and provides a prayerful space for mid-week Low Mass and prayer.

The benefice of Coven was created six years ago, having previously been in plurality with Holy Cross, Bilbrook. The parish have received assurances that this status will remain and there are no plans for pastoral reorganisation. The benefice is a House for Duty post.

Since 1992 the parish has been a resolution A & B parish. When the House of Bishops Resolution came into effect, the PCC considered, discussed and prayed about the way forward. The decision to come fully under the pastoral and sacramental care of the Bishop of Oswestry was passed and after a recent vote (2022) we remain committed to that decision.

## The Challenge

The challenges for our parish and the new priest are:

### ***Discipleship***

Supporting our congregation and develop a programme of teaching which will deepen our faith and enable us to show God's love through our words and actions.

We have identified in the congregation a need for teaching, so that there is a theological base for the mission that has already started to happen.

### ***Vocation***

Working with our congregation to explore the vocations we all have as Christians. Leading the church in setting its vision for the future and enabling us to achieve that vision. Helping us to communicate with all areas of the parish and facilitate inclusivity.

In terms of worship, we are a Eucharistic community and there is scope for further development of this in terms of music and further lay participation.

### ***Evangelism***

Our attempts to increase our outreach into the wider community have been hampered by Covid but we are starting to gain ground again. We want to work with our new priest to strengthen what has already been achieved and explore ways of developing this further. The community are always keen to support the church in our social activities so we now need to develop this into them becoming members of the congregation.

## The Role of the next Vicar of Coven

### ***Worship and Preaching***

Be an excellent communicator, preacher and teacher of the faith. Specifically reflecting, interpreting and preaching the gospel in a way that will encourage faith development, adapting content and style for different audiences, occasions and purpose.

### ***Mission and Outreach***

Able to integrate and develop rapport with the community, the congregation and a wide range of people by developing relations with the community and external organisations to promote positive links with the Church. Enjoy working with our Church Primary School as a partner in mission.

### ***Stewardship and parish organisation***

Be insightful, have a good sense of humour with the passion and energy to make things happen, with the help of the PCC and members of the congregation.

### ***Leadership and working collaboratively***

Encouraging and building up the community of faith by attracting and stimulating people unfamiliar with traditional Church contexts by creating different worship style, specifically aimed at engaging young families in the village of Coven.

### ***Pastoral Care***

Be a visible witness to the work of the Church community, by demonstrating active listening and empathetic behaviour to sustain St Paul's identity as a village parish Church with already strong connections to village life and activities.

### ***The role of parish priest at St Paul's, Coven will particularly suit a man who:***

- has a pastoral heart and a caring nature
- has a sense of humour, is approachable and prepared to become involved with the wider community of the village
- will support and develop the initiatives already started and able to use the talents and gifts of the PCC and congregation

## **Shaping for Mission**

- Our new Parish Priest will be working with other churches in the Deanery to assist in Shaping for Mission which is the process across Lichfield Diocese to strengthen our life of discipleship, vocation and evangelism while facing a significant reduction in financial income. The process began by the forming of team of people from different parishes whose input would form the Deanery Report. Clare Huguot, a member of the PCC, was the representative from St Paul's during the process.
- There were three phases in the Shaping for Mission process. During the first phase, which was completed roughly a year ago, the excellent work already going on in our deanery, covering a wide range of services and activities, fundraising and stewardship was reviewed. This phase also highlighted some areas where there was room for improvement, and this led into the second phase.
- The second phase for the team involved looking at setting the vision for what we want our deanery to be in the future. They had several meetings and discussed a range of topics and ideas before deciding that the focus areas for our deanery would be:
  - 1. Practically managing sustainability by:

- a. Sharing resources, training and development for clergy and laity
- b. Encouraging and supporting vocations
- c. Sustaining a local faithful presence
- 2. Being more missional across parish boundaries by:
  - a. Welcoming those in new housing estates
  - b. Outdoor church
  - c. Youth, children and family services
- This vision was summarised in the following sentence: “We want to encourage and enable each other to share the love of Jesus in the places we are”
- These ideas were then presented to the Bishop of Lichfield and Archdeacon in late Autumn 2021. This concluded the first part in the Shaping for Mission process and the group was then disbanded after this presentation.
- The third phase has been taking place since late 2021, where Bishops’ Senior Staff and AMPCs (Area Mission and Pastoral Committees) will begin the process of translating the vision of all the deaneries into action and aligning resources accordingly.
- The vision was presented to the Deanery Synod in a meeting in February 2022 and it is hoped that a group will form on the back of this to help move the vision forward.

## What we have to offer?

This is best explained by looking at what we believe we offer physically and spiritually. We care very much for our Parish Priest. We will love him and support him. We will respect his days off and holiday entitlements. We will support him by our prayers and by our presence. St Paul’s is a collaborative parish community, we are used to debating issues and are able to see things from one another’s point of view. We may have differences of opinion, but we seek to ensure these never fester and cause harmful rifts.

We will reimburse expenses of office, we will help with maintaining the vicarage and gardens, and we will provide administrative support and we don’t expect our Parish Priest to ‘do it all himself’.

## Why we love our Church?

- Our worship and prayer is central to everything we do.
- We are very much a family.
- We love and care about one another.
- The Church has a strong witness to, and involvement with, the local community.
- We have an extensive social life.
- We have a beautiful Church building which is well loved.



## Church Leadership

The PCC consist of 7 members. We currently meet every 2 months and have an excellent working relationship. Members of the PCC have a wide range of relevant and useful skills which are put to good use. One member of the PCC attends the meetings of the Deanery Synod and reports back at each PCC meeting. During the vacancy we have dealt with all Banns, Weddings, Baptism and other enquiries. The Churchwardens have dealt with all funeral and Churchyard related matters. We have made our own arrangements to secure Society priests to cover our main Masses and other services. Our Verger holds an extended license from the Bishop to take Holy Communion to the sick and the housebound.

We have a team of readers, sides people and Eucharistic Assistants (who hold the Bishop's licence). A monthly rota for these roles is produced and circulated by a designated member of the congregation.

## Mission Action Plan

Our last Mission Action Plan was drawn up at a PCC Away Day held in the autumn of 2016. The PCC have recently revisited it and put in some short term goals which we feel we will be able to complete in the time frame.

It would be a priority for our new priest to work with us at developing a new MAP soon after their appointment to enable us to focus on teaching and making new disciples, and to develop a specific outreach plan for different parts of the community.

## Church Finances

Our Income for 2021 was £28,019.16 and our expenditure £24,695.31 resulting in a surplus of £3,323.85. We still owed part of our Parish Share but this was paid at the beginning of 2022.

The Parish Quota for 2021 was £18,220, but this has now been reduced to £13,000.00.

The Income from Covenants and Gift Aid (Planned giving) was down in 2021. (£10,276 in 2020 - £8,837 2021). Uncovenanted Planned giving was slightly less at £2,211.80 in 2020 - £2,061.00 in 2021.

Collections at services in 2021 was higher at £1,236.31 compared to £650.20 last year.

These totals included plate donations and baptisms, weddings and funerals as well as our Sunday Collection.

Gift Aid tax return in 2021 was £3,954.48, which was an increase on last year.

Fundraising has been another essential part of our income in 2021 with a total of £6,698.66 raised.



fundraising activities throughout the year providing relief and help to the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd in Wolverhampton who seek to provide shelter and food to the homeless and to the Haven & GEMS Women's Refuge Centre and the maternity wards of Princess Royal, Telford, New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton and Walsall Manor.

We also have several people who regularly make monetary donations. Throughout the year we raise money to support Christian Aid, Water Aid, Compton Hospice for the terminally ill and the Children's Society. Our highly successful branch of Mothers Union holds numerous



A copy of our latest audited accounts from our AGM is included as Appendix 2.

## Styles and Traditions of Worship



The style of worship at St Paul's, Coven is catholic. There has been little change in the liturgy or music settings for the last 16 years. A new service book for the Eucharist was introduced in 2016 and there is increasing use of the laity in leading Intercessions and readings.

## Services

In addition to the Sung Eucharist on a Sunday which is at 10.00 a.m. there is a mid-week low Mass on Wednesdays at 10.30 a.m.

The full Holy Week Liturgy is celebrated, there are a number of 'community' based services such as a Memorial Service held on All Souls, where loved ones departed are remembered by name, a Christingle Service on Advent 1, Nine lessons and Carols on Advent 3, and services specifically centred around St Paul's First School.



## Music

Whilst there is currently no choir at St Paul's this has been identified as an area we desperately want to develop. Our regular organist has had to retire recently but we have other organists who help us, and a member of the congregation can use our sound system when required. Organist's fees paid are normally £40 per service.

An attempt (before Covid) to start a Community Choir received an enormous response from both the congregation and the local community. Sadly, we couldn't progress the initiative further at the time because we couldn't find anyone to run and lead it, but there is a great desire to develop this in the future.

## The Congregation

Our electoral roll currently stands at 44 this comprises 32 people resident in the parish and 12 people who do not reside within the parish boundaries.

The age profile of the congregation, typifies the trend in the wider Church, being enthusiastic over 60's, who have the time and the will to make a valuable contribution to the running of the church. However, it does not reflect the age profile of the village where 61% of the population are between 18 and 64. Targeting this age group is a key challenge and priority for us. We have 6 young people who regularly attend. Statistics taken from the Church of England census data indicates that 91% of the Parish population are White British and the congregation reflects this.

## The Church Building

St. Paul's was built 1857 on donated land to a conventional plan and in traditional Victorian style. It is Grade II listed and in a good state of repair. It has kitchen and disabled WC facilities and a satisfactory gas-fuelled heating system. There is a substantial balcony at the west and a 2-manual pipe organ in the south transept. A modern sound system with induction loop is in place. Main areas are carpeted.

Recent changes have included removal of all pews to provide a more flexible main area and the reinstatement of a Lady Chapel in the south transept as a prayerful place for smaller gatherings.

Although we lack our own church hall we have a close relationship with the nearby Coven Memorial Hall, a capacious modern building with high quality facilities and car parking.

## The Churchyard

Our church is set in a green and pleasant churchyard now closed for further burials. Basic maintenance is provided by our local council with further help from parishioners as required. The area is surrounded by a high holly hedge bordering a quiet lane and open fields and is already well used as a place of peace and reflection. We intend to cooperate in a new diocesan initiative to foster even greater usage and to further improve the standard of maintenance.

There are already several bequeathed benches, mature trees and rose beds. The two registered war graves are readily accessible.

Beyond the adjacent vicarage is a further smaller burial area with a few plots still available.

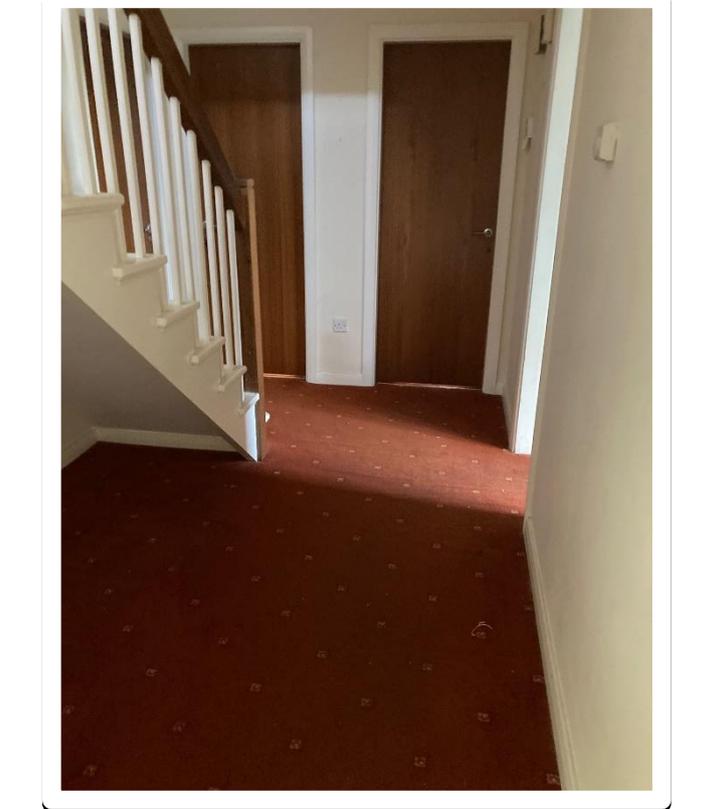
## The Vicarage

This is a large detached modern house with a substantial, mainly grassed garden with mature trees and shrubs, situated next to the church. The downstairs comprises of living, dining and study rooms together with kitchen, utility and cloakroom. There are four bedrooms and a family bathroom on the first floor.

The completion of work highlighted in the quinquennial survey will be done during the vacancy where a new kitchen will be installed.







**Approximate** room dimensions:

- Living room 25' x 17.5'
- Dining room 20' x 17.5'
- Study 20' x 25'
- Kitchen 20' x 10'
- Bedroom 1 25' x 17'
- Bedroom 2 15' x 15'
- Bedroom 3 17.5' x 13.5'
- Bedroom 4 13.3' x 10'

## Parish Activities and Programmes

There had been an annual parish pilgrimage to Walsingham which we hope to resume in 2023. Also, individual members continue to visit for specific events and to support defined initiatives at the Shrine and convent. There have also been meditative away days in Lichfield cathedral and at Glasshampton monastery in Worcestershire.

Coven is situated alongside the Midlands network of canals, and we often have visits from narrow boat dwellers who are passing through. A little-known fact is that canals can be an area of great social deprivation. Our outreach here resulted in us contacting the Waterways chaplaincy, and we became the first Waterways Chaplaincy Mission Partnership Church in the country. Unfortunately, since Covid and our vacancy we have had to put this on hold.

We have enjoyed a packed programme of social events very much designed to keep the FUN at the front of FUNdraising.

We have a very enthusiastic team of fund raisers who produce a programme for the year and get the Parish involved in everything we do.

Professional events in aid of St. Paul's in the village hall have included a Vintage / Retro evening with entertainment provided by a trio of girl vocalists singing hits from the 30's, 40's and 50's, and a show by a group of award-winning entertainers presenting the distinct humour of the Black Country.

Coffee and a chat are on offer after Sunday morning Mass and every Saturday morning.

## Children and Youth Work

We are slowly building up links with children and young people in the parish and have a very good rapport with the local church school.

The Beavers/Cubs and Scouts are sponsored by the church and their leaders are keen to have them



involved in church events. They started off 9 years ago using the church space but have now moved to the school as their numbers have grown. Church

members are on the Executive Committee and the 1<sup>st</sup> Coven Scout Group are now the 1<sup>st</sup> Coven St Paul's. The Beavers and Cubs who meet on Tuesday evening both have waiting lists and the Scout group is thriving.

There are no specific church youth workers but enthusiastic volunteers.

Summer workshops have been held and day long Easter and Harvest workshops involving years 3 and 4 of St Paul's First School were a great success. The children's Harvest, Christingle and Carol Services are always well attended.

## Church School

There is one Church First School in the parish. South Staffordshire still operates a three-tier school system, so Years 1 – 4 are accommodated here. At the end of year 4, pupils mostly transfer to either Brewood or Codsall Middle Schools.

The Church has developed strong links with St Paul's First School, who state on their website that they are "an inclusive Church of England School where every child is valued and supported to achieve their very best. We are proud of our pupils, our staff and the positive atmosphere we create through our focus on Christian values".

Until the Vacancy a monthly act of worship took place in the school building, with the children and their parents also attending Church for services, especially for them, throughout the liturgical seasons, where then can be upwards of 200 in attendance. Our previous parish priest regularly took assemblies, and he has been assisted by other members of the congregation in developing and producing sessions which aim to teach the children about the Christian faith. All teaching staff and assistants have attended an INSET day on Christian values and ethics, and the school use the Lichfield Diocese scheme of work for teaching religious education.

Two members of the congregation are Foundation Governors and the Parish Priest is ex officio.

## Communication

Communication within the church is via the Newsletter which is produced weekly with notices given out during the service.

Our website <http://stpaulschurchcoven.co.uk/> updated regularly. We also have an up-to-date entry on the Church of England 'A Church Near You' website. We have an active Facebook at *St Paul's Church, Coven, Staffordshire, Diocese of Lichfield* with over 200 followers.

Our First School and our Sponsored Scout Group sends out notifications to parents about Services at Church which are specifically aimed at children.

## Pastoral Offices

### ***Baptisms***

During the vacancy the officiating priest will speak to the baptismal families beforehand and at the Baptism itself an inscribed Children's Bible is presented to the family together with a Baptism candle and a hand knitted teddy. There were 8 baptisms in 2021.

The Baptisms are held at a date and time agreed between the family and the Parish Priest

### ***Weddings***

We generally have between 5 to 10 Weddings in Church each year but there were only 2 in 2021. Previous incumbents have been prepared to remarry divorcees. Couples are prepared for their Wedding through an initial meeting with the Parish Priest, followed by a more in depth one nearer to the wedding date, with a final rehearsal with the key people a week or so before.

### ***Funerals***

In 2021 there were 5 funerals held in church and 3 committals or burial of ashes.

## **The Challenges and Opportunities that have come as a result of Covid**

When the first lockdown occurred, our main challenge was to ensure that we kept in contact with all our congregation. This was done at the beginning through phone calls and our weekly news sheet. It later progressed to live streaming the service and holding zoom coffee meetings afterwards where hymns were sung. We were aware from the beginning that some members of the congregation would not have access to the technology needed so continuing the phone calls and newsletter was very important. Our second challenge was to ensure that enough funds came in to keep the church running. Most of our congregation gave money through the regular giving envelopes or on the plate so for the first few weeks very little was coming in. However, through gentle encouragement, most people changed to giving by direct debit or pushed their envelopes through the treasurer's door.

Baptisms, weddings and funerals were all affected. One couple having to re-arrange their wedding three times and baptisms were postponed until rules were relaxed. Explaining to families that only 15 people could attend a funeral was heart-breaking for the church wardens who had personal contact with the bereaved.

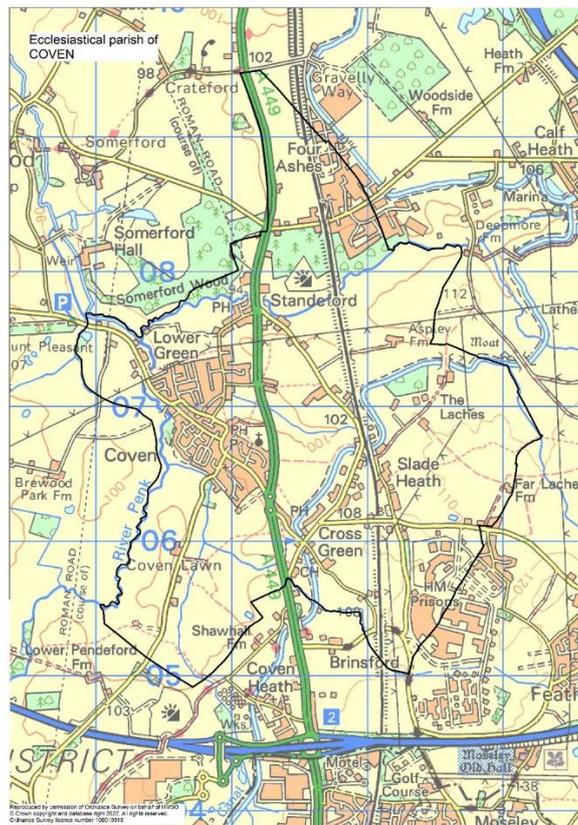
Being without a shepherd was hard but our churchwardens did an excellent job of keeping us together and as soon as restrictions were lowered, they ensured that the church was open for worship once more.

Having worked through the challenges we find ourselves a much closer-knit family. We are still in contact with those older members of the congregation who have not returned through illness or continuing Covid worries.

We learned to ‘think outside the box’. People contacted neighbours and sang carols on their own doorstep, outdoor garage sales were held and our yearly Afternoon Cream Tea (usually held in church) was delivered to people in boxes.

We are now more ‘tech savvy’ and our finances are now digital but there is still room for growth in this area.

## The Parish



The benefice of Coven (the ‘o’ pronounced as ‘cove’) covers Coven Village, itself one of around 20 villages administered by South Staffordshire District Council. This is a large rural and semi-rural area bounded to south & east by the City of Wolverhampton, to the west by Shropshire and in the north by other district councils, subordinate to Staffordshire County Council located in Stafford town. (please refer to additional map at back of the profile).

Village housing stock is mainly post-1930s with a wide variety of attractive properties. A modest increase to this is planned. Nine shops and two inns supply local needs and there is designated part-time GP facilities with the main centre just two miles away.

Efforts continue to encourage further employment opportunities; the flagship Jaguar Land Rover engine plant is part of the i54 development close by with other significant employers

sited in designated areas principally alongside the A449 primary route. As a result, the rate of employment is already high and levels of deprivation correspondingly low.

Coven's population of some 4500 is 90% white British of whom 61% are adult, 16% under 18 and just 25% over the age of 65.

St. Paul's provides governorship to our high-performing CofE primary school and has close links with Coven Methodist church and a sheltered housing complex nearby.

There is great pride within the village and new residents rarely leave once they have settled and been made welcome! Coven has been several times winner of the area's Best Kept Village competition.

### **Coven – summary deprivation**

Statistically the village of Coven is an area of least deprivation.

## **The Area**

Historically the southern areas of Staffordshire comprised much of the wealth creating industrial area adjacent to Birmingham and loosely described as the 'Black Country'. This large urban area is now divided between five unitary authorities including Wolverhampton leaving the remaining acres of south Staffordshire remarkably green with much to be enjoyed.

Within 30 minutes' drive from St. Paul's, there are major shopping opportunities in Telford and Wolverhampton; Cannock and Stafford provide regular markets and some specialist shops plus several modern retail parks. There are numerous leisure centres plus theatres in Cannock, Stafford and Wolverhampton.

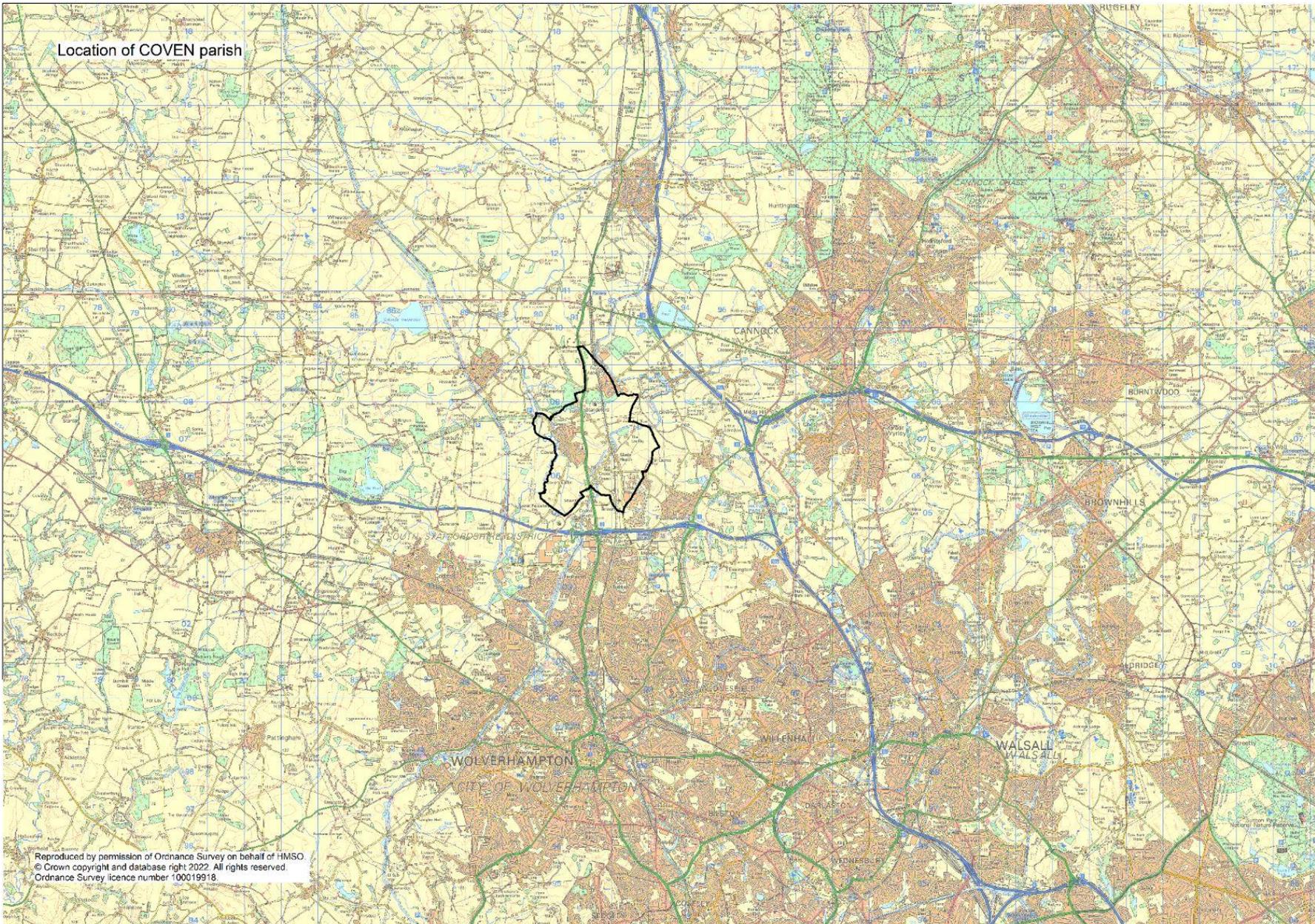
Several significant National Trust and English Heritage houses are open throughout the year. Cannock Chase (designated an area of outstanding natural beauty) provides opportunity for bird watching and serious walking.

If required, Birmingham can be reached by local rail or via the Metro tram system from Wolverhampton or by train from nearby villages.

The jewel in the diocesan crown is the unique and beautiful Lichfield cathedral with its three elaborately decorated spires towering over the city. From here are overseen the spiritual needs of over 400 parishes spread over a huge area including Staffordshire, north Shropshire and of course the Black Country!



Location of COVEN parish



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