

Conservation Areas

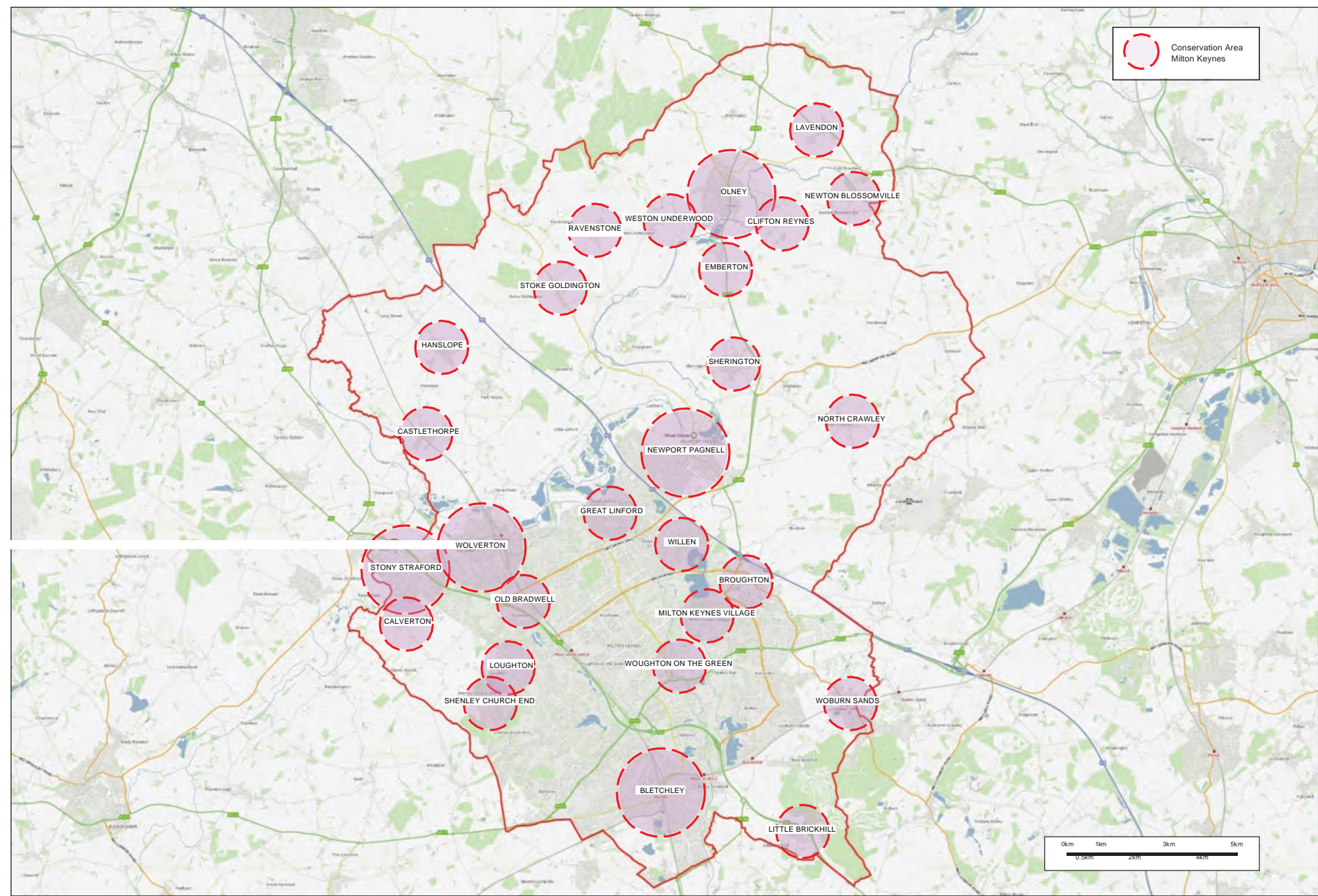
General Information Document March 2020

Conservation and Archaeology



milton keynes council

Conservation Areas in Milton Keynes



1 Introduction

Conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'¹

Milton Keynes Council (the Council) has 27 conservation areas within its administrative boundary (Map 1). It is a statutory requirement for councils to review their conservation area boundaries and the supporting texts from 'time to time'². In line with best practice the council seeks to review its conservation areas every five years. However, it is now over five years since any of the council's conservation areas were reviewed.

The purpose of the review programme is to update existing conservation area boundaries and supporting documents to ensure their relevance and reliability, particularly with regard to the council's development management function. The council will also ensure that each area justifies designation because of its special architectural or historic status and that the concept of special interest is not devalued through the ongoing designation of areas that lack special interest³.

Along with the 27 specific review documents this General Information Document (GID) includes information and context, including relevant legislation and policy, that is relevant to all the conservation areas in order to avoid repetition.

As such, the conservation area review for each conservation area consists of both the GID and the relevant review document.

2 Milton Keynes Borough Historic Development

Pre Roman and Roman

Milton Keynes Borough is rich in archaeological remains with sites and finds from the Palaeolithic period onwards. Though the prehistoric and Roman periods were important in shaping the appearance of the wider landscape, there is little discernible influence on the character and appearance of the later towns and villages in the area, including the 27 conservation areas. The single pre-medieval feature that does exert a readily discernible influence is the line of Roman Watling Street, which forms the spine of Stony Stratford town and conservation area.

Medieval

The medieval settlement pattern is largely one of nucleated villages with surrounding open fields. Many of the designated village conservation areas retain fragmentary remnants of undulating ridge and furrow ploughing in the surrounding landscape providing physical evidence of these early subdivided field systems.

Also surviving and affecting historic settlement layout are the motte castles at Shenley Church End, Old Wolverton, Bradwell, Newport Pagnell, Lavendon and Castlethorpe. Though some may be Norman in origin others may date from 1135-1153 the period known as the 'Anarchy' when Stephen and Matilda struggled to assert their claim to the crown. Lavendon also has an earlier possibly late Saxon in date defensive ringwork.

Elsewhere there are moated sites dating from the 13th century onwards. In some instances they have been supplanted by rectories or other substantial properties. Of the 50 scheduled ancient monuments nine⁴ overlap or lie adjacent to the district's conservation areas and have a direct impact on layout and character.

The three towns in existence at this time, Newport Pagnell, Olney and Stony Stratford all have different reasons behind their origins but share some common features. Newport Pagnell may have had its origins in Saxon times as a defensive point at the confluence of the Ouzel and the Great Ouse. A defensive wall may

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 S.69(1)

² Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 S.69(2)

³ The National Planning Policy Framework (2018), paragraph 186

have followed the line of Union Street⁵ securing the natural advantage offered by the slightly higher ground at this point. Olney and its market place appear to be more planned and positioned at a bridging point over the Great Ouse. Stony Stratford's origins are linked to the line of Watling Street and the bridging point to the northwest. The town's later function as a staging post on Watling Street, and indeed being the northern terminus of the section that ran between Stony Stratford to Hockliffe, the first operated by a turnpike trust, led to a lengthy period of prosperity and consolidation in the town. The original market was probably at the north end of the High Street where it broadens close to the site of the Eleanor Cross. The creation of the existing market place at a more convenient location on the west (Calverton) side of the road behind St Giles church suggest post medieval planning, the main clue being its intrusion over a series of older burgage plots. Wealth generated by turnpike traffic gave rise to the imposing coaching inns that populate High Street. All three towns share a layout of a main street lined with narrow burgage plots and back lanes. This arrangement is indicative of an element of planning early in the development of each town.

Post Medieval and Modern

The subdivided open field system first started to develop into a pattern of fields enclosed by hedges in the 16th century. The process was piecemeal at first but gathered pace with extensive parliamentary enclosure in the 17th and 18th centuries using acts of parliament to remove land from common ownership accompanied by a change to pastoral farming that preserved the distinctive medieval strip farming still discernible in unploughed fields today.

This process of enclosure created social upheaval and the abandonment of some settlements or a reduction in their size as at Woughton on the Green. Whilst some farms remained village based with access to newly consolidated blocks of fields the landscape also became dotted with farmsteads located away from settlements for the first time.

The newly created fields also meant that roads and lanes between and within villages were formalised. Whilst there are no long-distance droving roads in the borough rural hedge lines indicate a broad width to these lanes and their use for moving animals from the countryside into markets at Hanslope, Olney, Newport Pagnell and Stony Stratford.

The number of people required for pre-mechanised farming meant that historic local tracks and paths

between settlements and fields were established.

Today, numerous village based conservation areas retain routes that change from a metalled to un-metalled surface before leading off into the open countryside. Many settlements also retain cottages for labourers and their extended families that might, at various times of the year, all be drawing income from employment on the land. Long Lane in Olney has been incorporated into the 20th century street pattern of the town but the straight westward direction of its line is clearly visible, leading from West Street through newer developments before giving out into open land which is still farmed.

Until the late 18th century roads of varying quality were the only means of moving goods and materials from one place to another. Whilst the turnpike system of reliably maintained toll roads was being established, it was the arrival of the Grand Junction Canal in the 1790's (the Grand Union Canal since 1929) that first significantly affected the economies and appearance of villages and small towns in the locality. Wharfs were built at Old Wolverton, Fenny Stratford, Stantonbury and Great Linford. The 1st Edition

Ordnance Survey 25in map (circa 1880) confirms numerous brick yards and lime kilns interspersed with the domestic cottages and farms at Simpson. However, whilst the waterway provided opportunities for some local traditional industries such as brick making, others suffered a decline as cheaper factory made lace, crockery and items based on leather and wool began to replace local manufacture.

A single example illustrating the way in which transport links would introduce new methods and materials in to the area is the construction of Tickford Bridge in Newport Pagnell from cast iron sections rather than local stone. The components were cast in a foundry at Rotherham, taken by ship to London and then by canal to Great Linford. As the canal to Newport Pagnell was not commenced until 1815 the last mile to Newport was by road. The iron bridge is constructed of 6 ribs in eleven segments using mortice and tenon joints normally associated with timber construction. Work was completed by 1810.

In 1838 work started on the construction on the Wolverton Works site, part of the infrastructure required to serve the new London to Birmingham Railway.

⁵ Pevsner N, The Historic Buildings of England (1993) Penguin Books

⁴ At Bradwell, Castlethorpe, Lavendon, Loughton, Milton Keynes village, Newport Pagnell, Ravenstone, Sherington and Woughton on the Green



Tickford Iron Bridge over the River Ouzel
(or Lovat), Newport Pagnell

Under the supervision of Robert Stephenson, the chief engineer, the construction the line and the first works' buildings were significant undertakings in themselves. That this endeavour also brought about a whole new town in the early Victorian era onwards, along with subsequent and ongoing expansions in the scale function and capacity of the works themselves, is recognised by the inclusion of the town and works within the Wolverton conservation area. Taken together the industrial buildings and planned grid pattern housing combine to create an impressive set piece of Victorian planning and endeavour of considerable historic value.

The creation of the works also assertively proclaimed a new era of construction. Scattered local brickworks like that at Great Linford, which had capitalised on the easy availability of clay in the area since the C16th began to consolidate into larger works centred around Bletchley⁶. Slow grown Baltic timber and durable and plentiful Welsh slate also began to appear in the area in ever increasing quantity, supplanting the vernacular materials and building techniques. This mid to late Nineteenth century blurring and weakening of vernacular appearance and character, whilst creating a new character and quality of its own, is apparent in all of the borough's conservation areas and reflects a

national move away from local self-sufficiency to an interdependent system of mass production at the national level.

For the first time, the railways brought about not just the quick and easy movement of goods and materials but the free movement of people. Access to different parts of the country was affordable and convenient for many. Although the rural population of north Buckinghamshire seemed fairly static in the face of the general movement of people into the larger towns, the works would have been a new local source of regular employment for the established rural population and would also have drawn in skilled employees from elsewhere.

A short distance to the south, at Bletchley the London and North Western Railway had built by 1862 branch lines connecting Oxford to Cambridge. Lying midway between the two and having easy rail access to London meant Bletchley had a conveniently strategic location that was further enhanced by the presence of Bletchley Park house and grounds. At the outbreak of the Second World War this fortuitous combination of circumstances proved decisive in Bletchley Park being chosen as the site of a new communications and codebreaking facility. This site has subsequently

⁶ British Brick Society Summer Meeting 25.7.15: The Fringes of Milton Keynes—Brickworks, Railway Stations, Churches.
http://britishbricksoc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BBS_Milton_Keynes_visit_July_2015.pdf

become renowned for the development of the early programmable computer technology required to decipher encrypted enemy communications.

In the north of the borough a branch line connecting Northampton to Bedford opened in 1872 passed close to the north end of Olney bringing with it a station and goods yard through which the materials passed to build new mid nineteenth century terraced housing embedded with out-workers' shops and a large factory associated with shoe making. Much of this landscape lies outside the current conservation area boundary but seems to survive partly intact and is examined more closely in the Olney draft review.

At Newport Pagnell the line of the canal was filled in and a rail link built by 1865. Once again a new mid to late Victorian suburb was built from the materials shipped to the site of the old wharf at the western end of the High Street, breaking with the vernacular traditions of this characterful town. Plans were made to carry the line northwards to Olney but construction was abandoned before completion leaving unused embankments standing in the open landscape to the west of Emberton and Sherington. Olney's Victorian terraced streets cluster at the north end of the town close to the location of station and yards of the Northampton to Bedford line.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century there is an establishment of small scale rural engineering businesses possibly growing out of the reuse of increasingly redundant blacksmith sites or just due to the availability of cheap land located between a number of larger settlements for haulage and omnibus companies. Village based engineering works would also have found business serving increasingly complex mechanical farming machinery, first in the form of steam engines, both wheeled and static and then later diesel and petrol. A number of the premises that these businesses operated from are still present in the borough. The high end of this trade is represented by the development of the Tickford works of Salmon & Sons coachbuilders through the 20th century into world renowned car manufacturer Aston Martin Lagonda.

The New Town

The value of the existing small village settlements was recognised in the new town's layout design. Those villages that were located within the new town boundary including Bradwell, Broughton, Great Linford, Loughton, Shenley Church End, Willen, Milton Keynes village and Woughton on the Green were allocated generous open parkland settings to preserve a sense of their historic rural setting. Surrounding developments often demonstrate a sympathetic and skillful architectural approach, generally remaining low rise and allowing trees to predominate.

There are currently no conservation areas that are designated solely because of their new town significance. However, under the statutory requirement of s.69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990, the LPA will need to give consideration to whether there are areas of the new town that merit designation as conservation areas. This process will take place following the current review programme.

3 Local Geology and Topography

It is evident that the resources yielded by the land have played a fundamental role in shaping the economy and appearance of the locality.

The looping meanders of the River Great Ouse through its shallow valley as it flows eastward and northward attest to the shallowness of the fall of land. The canal, loosely following a contour southward, but embanked here and there, remains lock free for its passage through the borough only requiring a viaduct to carry its line over the Great Ouse at Cosgrove. The Ouzel (or Lovat) river flows northwards to its confluence with the Ouse at Newport Pagnell as do Loughton and Broughton Brooks to their respective confluences.

Generally, outside the urban areas, the impression is one of rolling countryside, a little more pronounced in the north than in the south. Villages are dotted around this landscape, tending towards sheltering folds in the land; the clay upland plateau was more sparsely populated historically however.

To the south of the borough the land rises in a comparatively dramatic fashion following the line of the Greensand ridge. The opportunities of being on higher land and on the line of newly turnpiked roads were used to good effect by Woburn Sands, once an 'End' to Wavendon and Little Brickhill but by the late C19th a popular Victorian resort town.

The geology of the area falls into two broad zones across the borough with a third, the Greensand ridge, at its southerly end.

North of the River Great Ouse and in the Ouzel valley are outcrops of sedimentary Jurassic limestone where the valley sides have eroded overlying clays. Sitting near the top of the layers of Jurassic stone is the Blisworth limestone formation which yields a predominantly creamy, honey coloured stone. Whilst not an easily workable freestone, it nevertheless provides a dependably solid building stone, but one from which any intricate ornamentation is generally absent.

To the south of the Great Ouse valley the building stones are absent and instead a swathe of Oxford clay overlies the landscape.

The lack of readily available building stones meant that greater reliance was placed on brick and timber for dwellings in the area.

To the south is an outcrop of iron rich greensand stone (The Greensand Ridge), a hard but durable ironstone which is found in boundary walls and some buildings in the borough.

Historically both the Oxford Clay and Woburn Sands formations have been of economic significance, with a number of brickworks being present to the north of the ridge and fuller's earth quarries (for use cleaning or 'fulling' wool) along the scarp at Aspley Heath and Aspley Wood.

An appreciation of the inter-relationship between geology and topography provides important insights into the changing character of the borough's historic settlements as one moves from north to south.

4 Building Materials

The building materials most commonly encountered in the borough's conservation areas include wood, stone, brick, tile and slate, straw, lead and metal, glass and earth. The specific craft skills applied to raw materials, the quality and availability of the materials themselves and the changing manufacturing practices and construction methods all combine to provide important insights into historic living and working conditions. Knowledge of changing and improving practices helps to date buildings, provide evidence into the sequence of building or site development and, by adding to our understanding, ascribe significance to the borough's heritage assets. The detail of local materials and their use is provided below:

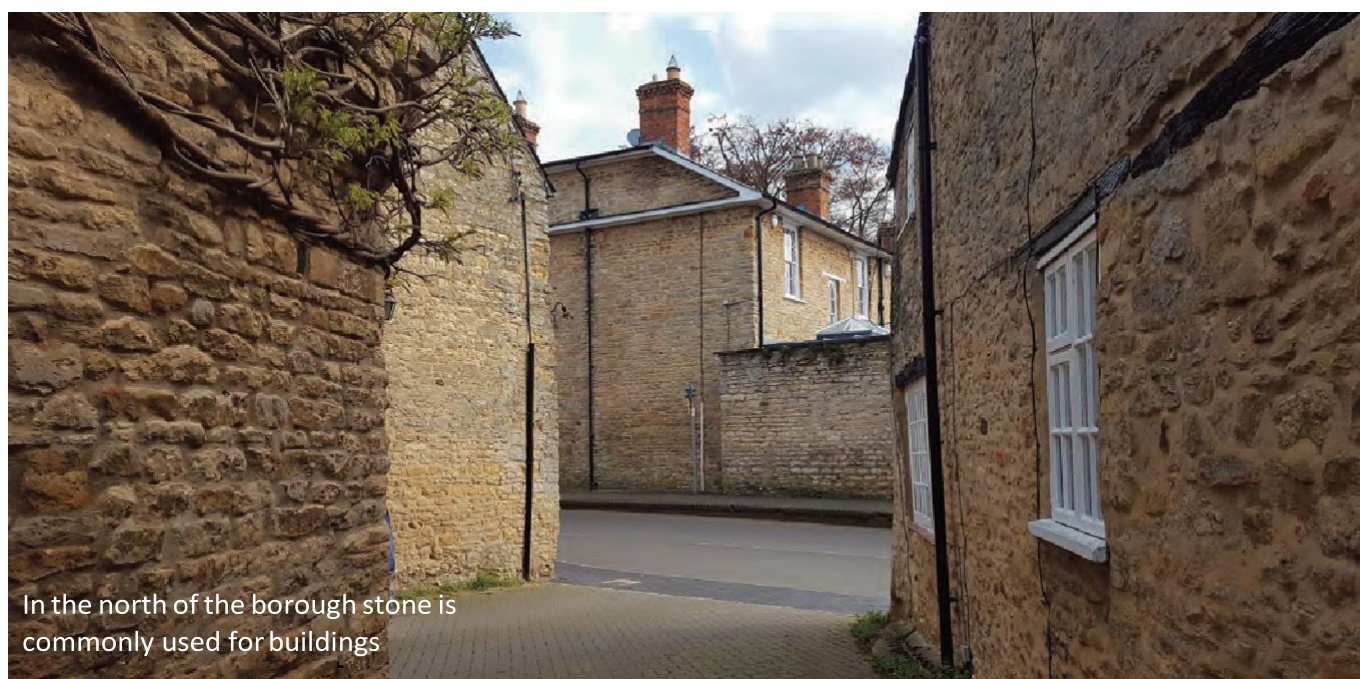
Wood

Until the 18th century much of the timber used for building was hardwood such as Elm, Ash or Oak. Slow grown, softwood Baltic timber was increasingly used as an alternative during the nineteenth century. Timber was used for major structural work such as roofs and for weight bearing, timber framed exterior walls. However, spine beams, floor joists and boards, stairs, windows, doors, ornamental cornices, dado rails and skirtings were also manufactured from wood. Weatherboarding

on rural outbuildings, usually dark stained, is still a relatively common sight in the borough. Wood lends itself to ornate turning and carving and a number of the borough's late Georgian and early Victorian houses have very pretty staircases rising gracefully upwards through them. .

Stone

Chiefly pale grey to honey coloured Blisworth Stone is used in the borough. It is quite rugged in appearance and does not lend itself easily to fine carving thus lending buildings fashioned from it a robust and undemonstrative appearance. Across the borough stone is used to construct the medieval churches but is used most freely in the north of the district where outcrops are common. Here every village would once have had its own stone pit or quarry. In the southern reaches of the borough the use of stone on secular buildings tends to be limited to dressing windows and doors and only then on later post Georgian buildings. By this time alternatives such as Portland or freer Northamptonshire limestones which lent themselves to carving were available and many Victorian buildings are embellished with stones sourced away from the area.



In the north of the borough stone is commonly used for buildings

Brick

In regular use across the borough from the late 18th century using clay from local pits before being supplanted by standardised imperial bricks during the 19th century which were made on an industrial scale at Bletchley, Bedford and Peterborough. The principal use of the material is for walling. Older local brick tends to be of a mid-orange to deep brown or almost black in colour depending whereabouts in the kiln it was fired. Brick masonry is enhanced by traditional bonds (patterns) such as English Bond or Flemish bond, both commonplace in the borough. In the latter, headers (the square end) and stretchers (the length) are laid alternatively to create cruciform patterns. This is sometimes emphasised further by the use of the burnt or 'vitrified' brick ends being used to pick out a diaper or chequerboard pattern as at Olney Almshouses for example. Frances Warwick's masterpiece, Chicheley Hall (built 1719-21), effectively displays the technical ability of bricklayers and the variety of uses for brick in the early eighteenth century. Elsewhere, the rows of late C19th and early C20th terrace housing and the railway works buildings in Wolverton demonstrate the large scale usage of imported brick.

Clay tile

Alongside brick making was the manufacture of orange-red clay plain roof tiles and shallow profile pantiles. Unlike brick their dimensions were more standardised to 10½ inches x 6½ inches by ½ inches by the late fifteenth century⁷. Like brick, plain clay tiles and clay ridges were favoured in towns in particular due to their fire resistant quality. Where stone tiles or slate was not available their use quickly spread. Many roofs in Stony Stratford have tile covering some of which may date from the 17th century.

Tiles are attached to a roof's battens either by nibs shaped out of the tile before firing and hung over the batten or by nailing them directly to the battens. As a result tiles are laid in regular courses across the roof from the eaves upward. As the tiles rise up across the plane of the roof the upper tile overlaps the lower tile by about 6 inches and is offset so that the join between two tiles sits over the surface of the tile underneath. The minimum pitch is usually no less than 45° to ensure that rainwater is thrown off. The weight of tiles can

cause supporting timbers to sag giving a wavy ridge line to some older buildings. Convex hip tiles and concave valley tiles allow for intricate roof shapes and dormers to be formed.

The handmade nature of tiles meant that they were produced with a double camber, a curve along their length and breadth which prevents them from lying completely flat and a genuine old tile roof can look distinctively jumbled as a result.

Slate

With the advent of mass transport and the fading of vernacular materials and building traditions so tile making gave way to the large imports of hard wearing Welsh Slate. At first Welsh slate, a fissile metamorphic rock, was cut quite coarsely and was relatively thick in profile compared to the later, larger dimensioned Victorian slates seen at Wolverton which lie almost flat. Although beyond the boundaries of a designated conservation area the 'fish tail' shaped slates at New Bradwell school building demonstrate the technical height of Welsh slate roofing in the borough.

Whether orange tile or dark grey slate, these materials influence the character or appearance of the borough's conservation areas by providing distinctive blocks of colour and texture at height.

Thatch

Thatched roofs remain a regular sight in North Buckinghamshire and are still present in almost all of the borough's conservation areas. The traditional local thatching material is long straw made from long stemmed wheat that was historically grown in the area. This type of thatch contains an uncombed mix of straw heads and butts and is thatched over a base coat of earlier thatch. As a result material has a shaggy softly curved appearance as it folds around the base coat at the verges of a roof and on the sides of dormers. The material is also flexible enough to allow it to fold over ridges dispensing with the now familiar raised, block cut, sedge ridge material cut into patterns that often signifies the presence of a reed or combed wheat thatch. Modern shorter stemmed straw combined with the more labour intensive methods for thatching in long straw have encouraged the use of alternative materials. Although combed wheat (where all the

⁷ Brunskill R. Vernacular Architecture: An Illustrated Handbook (2000) Faber and Faber

straws' heads and butts are at the same ends) and water reed thatch are now commonly present in the district they have an angular appearance and shallowness of depth to the finish that makes the finished thatch look more sparing and less luxuriant than the traditional long straw. Loss of long straw thatch has altered the appearance of many of the borough's thatched properties. The lack of demand in recent times has also threatened the survival of the historic craft skills required to thatch in traditional materials and methods. Where it survives long straw thatch makes an important positive contribution to local distinctiveness.

Metals

No lead bearing minerals exist in north Buckinghamshire and although some local stone has iron staining in it there is insufficient to economically yield any metal. Early lead for use on churches to line spouts discharging water or for leaded glazing would have been brought in from elsewhere. Lead sheet for roofing and 'H' profile comes for window leading may have come from central Derbyshire or the Mendip Hills, Somerset for working into shape.

Sources of iron were plentiful in Northamptonshire and would have supplied iron extracted from ore in blocks or ingots for refining and working in local forges. The presence of iron in the built environment from the 17th century onwards is subtle but increasingly widespread. By the end of the late 18th century E&H Roberts of Deanshanger was firmly established as a maker of agricultural implements and machinery for much of the local area. Work from the Robert's Deanshanger foundry survives in the form of grates and manhole covers and village pumps.

Houses and farm buildings retain many examples of locally made, hand forged latch handles, distinctive 'H' and 'HL' and 'butterfly' door hinges, fire surrounds and so on. Structural repairs for bowing walls occasionally resorted to pattress plates (connected by through bars) of one shape or another ('S', 'X' or circular for example) being present on the outside of buildings (example?). Later, in the 19th century ornate wrought ironwork found its way onto buildings in the form of decorative railings and fancy decorative work. Across central

England the Regency period provides numerous examples of the increasing use of iron in domestic architecture. Local examples however, are infrequent and are mostly small scale, such as the iron open work above the Cock Hotel's carriage arch (Stony Stratford). The singular exception is the intact and still used iron bridge of 1810 in Newport Pagnell. Throughout the 19th century standardised items began to populate public spaces in the form of bollards, street lights, railings and post boxes in increasing numbers. Here and there some of these items still survive to add local character and charm to the local conservation areas.

Glass

Perhaps unsurprisingly the earliest glass to survive in the borough is found in the early parish churches. It is not however stained glass but the much less ostentatious plain or quarry glazing, diamond in shape and set in a lattice of lead comes, that survives most often. The square or rectangular lattice is less structurally robust and so tends to be avoided for larger window areas. Diamond pattern glass is present in the Almshouses at Great Linford.

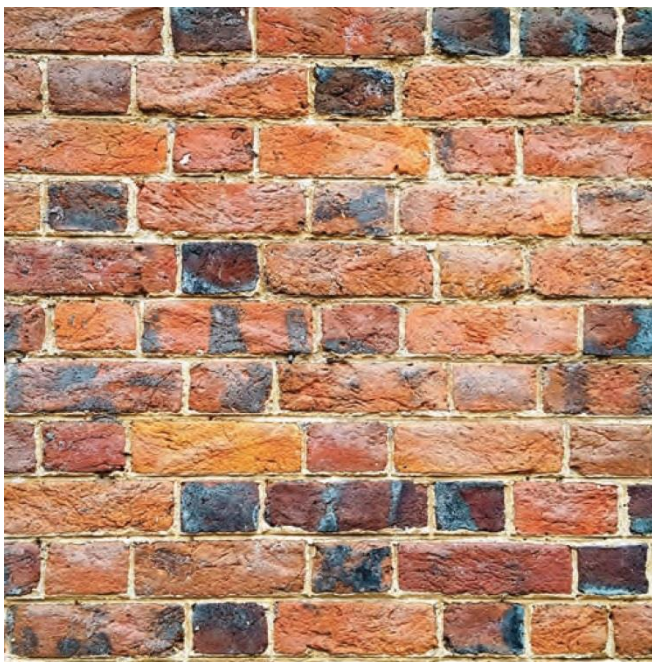
Elsewhere domestic glazing tends to be either crown glass or cylinder glass. Until about 1830 crown glass was made by forming a molten glass bubble flattening it out and then cutting off the bottom side and spinning this to a flat plate from which differing sized panes of glass could be cut. The limited size of the glass disc dictated the maximum dimensions of a glass pane that could be cut from it. Cylinder or broad glass was made until the middle of the 19th century and although not of the same quality as crown glass it could be used to make larger panes of glass. Both types of glazing had inconsistencies, circular waves in crown glass caused by the spinning process and lines caused by differential cooling in cylinder glass. Both types could be susceptible to marks known as 'seeds' which are bubbles elongated by the different stretching processes.

These imperfections in the glass tend to reflect light unevenly making the glazing sparkle in direct sunlight. Both types of glass are visibly different to smooth modern float glass and play a subtle but important role in differentiating older windows from modern replacements.

Lime Mortars

Crushed limestone can be burned to create quicklime and then slaked to create a soft putty which, if kept sealed from the open air, will not set. Once exposed to the atmosphere and free to cure it will dry and return to hard lime. Traditional construction took advantage of this lime cycle to create building mortars for stone and brick buildings. The lime putty would be worked to a more liquid state and a mix of grits, often smooth (soft) river sand with other crushed sharp stone debris, some hearth ash etc. where 1 bucket (or 'part') of lime would be added to 3 buckets (3 parts) of soft and sharp sand mixed to suit the specific building project. The moist lime in the mix would solidify and bind the grit into a hard mortar suitable for building.

The most basic mortars in the borough are found in old stone farm buildings where subsoil has been wetted to make thick mud, sometimes combined with horsehair to add some tensile strength, which was then trowelled onto stone to make hovel walls. Under compression and assuming no water penetration to wash out the earth, such walls last indefinitely. Dry earth mortar is friable and can be rubbed away by hand with ease.



A wide range of oranges and browns give handmade local bricks their distinctive character

Sometimes subsoil will be combined with lime putty to create a more robust mix. It is unlikely that farmhands charged with building a structure took care over the measurement of the components of the mix and so there tends to be something of a sliding scale of hardness to earth found in wall cores. It is highly unlikely that the lime component would exceed 25% of the mix however.

The fine frontages of grander buildings demanded much more considered use of lime mortars. Soft sand and lime putty with long maturation to maximise slaking for a smoother mix used in tight joints would contain only a minimal amount of grit to add some texture and help curing.

Lime mortar has the advantage of allowing water vapour to pass through it and whilst this caused a slow deterioration in the pointing over time this was easily rectified by repointing in a matching lime and sand mix. Buildings made from porous limestone inevitably contain moisture in their fabric and a common mistake is to repoint buildings with lime mortar mixed with hard modern cements to achieve a more rapid set. Where pointing is harder than the building material, whether stone or brick, there is a risk that the walls will suffer from increased dampness as the water vapour is prevented from migrating into the mortar and out into the air. In the worst cases moisture expands with frost forcing structural material to split apart.

Lime mortar makes a subtle but important contribution to local character and distinctiveness. It usually varies from white to a soft honey yellow with pin pricks of grit that enhances the colour of the stone and brick used as the principal building material.

5 Planning Framework

National Legislation

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 (The Act) states that:

(1) Every local planning authority—

(a) shall from time to time 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, and

(b) shall designate those areas as conservation areas.

(2) It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas; and, if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly.

Legislation thus sets out the basis for designating conservation areas and the duty to keep those areas under review from 'time to time'. The Act also requires local planning authorities (LPA) to keep non-designated areas in its jurisdiction under review until such time as the architectural or historic significance of an area may be deemed to warrant designation.

Section 72(1) of The Act requires local authorities to pay 'special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of (a designated) area' when considering applications for development in conservation areas. Proposals that have a neutral or positive impact on the prevailing architectural or historic character or appearance of a conservation area would therefore normally be held to be acceptable subject to wider planning considerations.

Conservation areas are locally designated and are intended to protect the character or appearance of a locality formed from a collection of buildings and spaces. Designation effectively provides an

opportunity to assess the impact of demolishing an existing building and the appropriateness of the proposed design of new developments in historic places. Works to trees in conservation areas also require six weeks' notice to the LPA after which the council may impose a tree preservation order.

Listed buildings are structures of national importance and are selected for inclusion on the statutory list by Historic England. The protection offered by listing is limited to individual buildings and to buildings in their curtilage, rather than to collections of buildings. Section 16 of The Act states that:

In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The special regard attached to any works to a listed building includes works to the interior or within its setting. In using the phrase 'special regard' the legislation sets a high barrier to alterations to listed buildings.



A vernacular scene at Sherington with local tile and stone. Note the open joint (mortar free) traditionally made boundary wall.

Government Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (published March 2012; last updated July 2018) Section 16 (NPPF) and other parts provide general guidance on implementing the provisions of The Act.

Paragraph 186 requires Local Planning Authorities to ensure that a conservation area 'justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest'. The reviews have looked at the existing conservation areas to identify those parts no longer held to be of sufficient merit to warrant designation and other places beyond the existing boundary that may warrant inclusion.

The NPPF's Glossary identifies listed buildings and conservation areas as 'designated heritage assets'. Harm to or loss of a building or feature that contributes positively to the character or appearance of a conservation area would thus be held to be harmful to a designated heritage asset.

The provisions of The Act talk in terms of setting for listed buildings but not conservation areas. However paragraph 189 of the NPPF makes no such distinction and the impact of development on the setting of conservation areas may be given consideration when determining applications held to be within the setting of a conservation area.

The provisions of paragraph 193 of the NPPF allocate 'great weight' to the conservation of designated heritage assets, echoing the 'special regard' for preserving listed buildings and 'special attention' paid to preserving or enhancing conservation areas.

Decisions on applications affecting designated heritage assets shall be made having regard to the importance of the asset, the level of harm caused and the justification for that harm in terms of wider public benefits.

Local Plan Policy

At the time of writing section 15 of the Milton Keynes Core Strategy (2013) and policy CS19 acknowledge the age and variety of historic assets in the borough. The wording of Policy CS19 recognises the emerging significance of 'important elements of the 20th Century New Town architecture'. In line with section 69(2) of The Act the council will continue to review and determine whether any parts of its area should be designated as conservation areas. As yet no proposals exist to designate areas of the new town as conservation area.

Saved Policy HE6: Conservation Areas Of the Milton Keynes Local Plan (2005) also conforms with the provisions of the NPPF (2012) hence proposals should also be taken into account when making and determining applications for planning permission.

Saved policies HE4 and HE5 relate to the conservation of listed buildings and their settings many of which are located within the borough's conservation areas.

In addition to the above provisions are emerging neighbourhood plans. These will have conservation policies tailored to the locality whilst still consistent with national legislation and guidance and local plan policy. The neighbourhood plans are taken

In 2019 Plan MK will replace the Council's existing local plan policies. It is anticipated that Policy HE1 of the current Proposed Submission Plan will remain unaltered.

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Bletchley Park House. The WWII home of the Government Code and Cypher School and where the world's first programmable, electronic computers were developed.

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