



Little Brickhill

Conservation Area:

Village Appraisal &

Character Statement

Date: 26 September 2006

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This document is an appraisal of the historic character of Little Brickhill and the justification for the village's designation as a conservation area.

Little Brickhill contains a number of historic buildings and spaces that in combination create a distinctive environment; it is the quality of this environment that is studied in the Village Appraisal and then summarised in the Character Statement with the means of protection and the opportunities for enhancement discussed subsequently.

In addition to the village's historic buildings the contribution made to the village's "special character" by topography, views, trees, the surrounding countryside and also by contemporary development are also taken into account. The way in which the village is experienced on foot from public spaces is assessed by means of a field walking exercise. The features and characteristics encountered are identified and set out in the Village Appraisal (see below).

The aim of conservation area designation is not to stifle development but to accommodate change sensitively, taking into account the acknowledged special character of the conservation area.

1.2 Planning Policy Context

Section 69.1a of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to identify those parts of their area that are of '*special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*' and to designate them as conservation areas. Conservation areas are a local designation intended to protect the quality and interest of an area rather than individual buildings. The designation of a conservation area thus essentially provides additional controls over demolition, strengthened controls over minor development and the protection of trees

The key consideration in deciding to designate a conservation area must be whether an area is of sufficient architectural or historic interest to warrant designation and thus benefit from those policies targeted at protecting their value. It is good practice to set out what is of value and interest in a character statement so that those features considered to be special may be more easily referred to. Conservation areas should be reviewed from time to time with reference to the qualities that were originally thought to be of interest and the boundary redrawn to take in new

areas and exclude others as necessary. The Local Plan Policies and other additional controls arising from conservation area designation are set out in Appendix B.

1.3 Objectives

In response to the duty placed on Milton Keynes Council to identify those parts of its area that are of ‘special architectural or historic interest’ this Appraisal and Character Statement document has two objectives:

1. To identify those historic and architectural features and qualities that combine to create special character, interest and sense of place and by so doing provide the basis for their protection.
2. To consider ways of managing and wherever possible improving the quality of the conservation area.

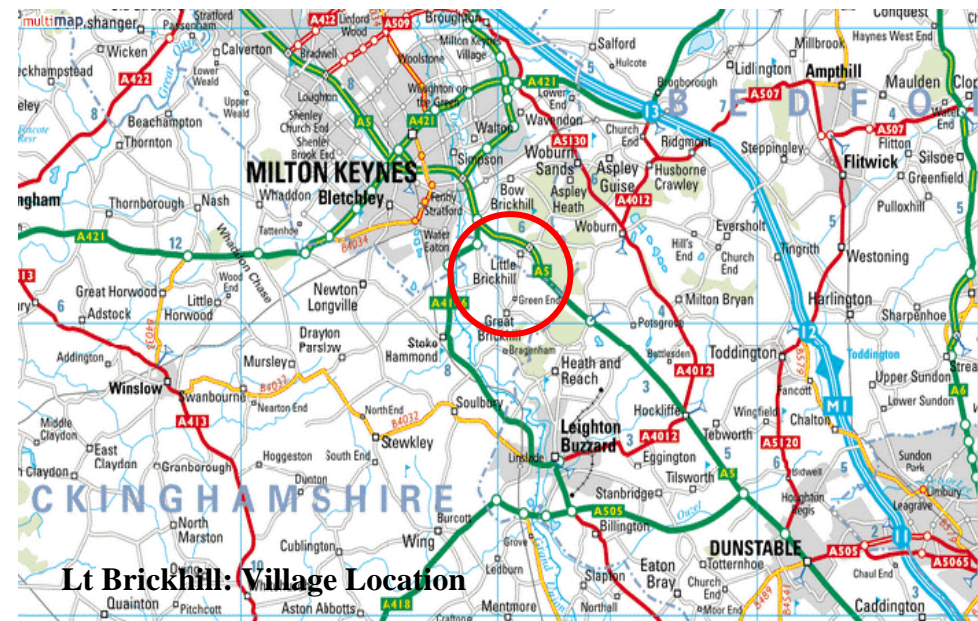
To meet the objectives the village is firstly appraised and the findings summarised in the character statement. In addition to summarising the village’s positive features and qualities the character statement also acknowledges those characteristics that are less beneficial. The Conclusions and Next Steps section details practical steps forward and suggests ideas and strategies for delivering improvements.

1.4 Location (see map)

Little Brickhill sits on a ridge overlooking the River Ouzel to the north-west and Milton Keynes beyond. To the north and east runs the line of the A5, diverted away from Little Brickhill since 1992.

1.5 Geology and Hinterland

The ridge on which the village sits is formed by greensand stone, a sandstone strip which runs on an east-west axis through the counties of Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. To the north of the village lies Aspley Heath, a large area of woodland, to the east and south of the village the fields are heavily interspersed with trees. Over to the north and west the land falls away quite steeply with fewer trees, giving open views out across adjacent fields and beyond as far as Central Milton Keynes.



1.6 Historic Development

The name Brickhill is believed to be derived from a combination of the Celtic word 'brye' meaning hilltop and 'hill' or 'hulle', the Anglo Saxon for hill. The area where the village was eventually founded was near to the original route of Watling Street, a major Roman road that ran through Magiovinium, a contemporary settlement the site of which can be seen from the western edge of the village.

After the departure of the Romans in 410 this part of Buckinghamshire became part of Mercia under Anglo Saxon domination. The Anglo Saxons rarely occupied former Roman sites, thus Magiovinium remained deserted. They preferred settlements on hills making Little Brickhill an ideal location for a new settlement. Little Brickhill existed by the time of the Norman Conquest but at what point between 410 and 1066 the settlement became established has yet to be confirmed.

The settlement developed according to its location on Watling Street, a major route to and from London for travellers and traders. By the 15th century Little Brickhill had become the first town on the Norfolk assize circuit and Warren Farmhouse was used as the location for proceedings. Elections and county meetings are also thought to have been held here. The last assizes in Little Brickhill took place in 1638.

The increasing traffic passing through Watling Street supported a total of seven inns by the beginning of the 17th century. A number of smaller alehouses supported by the passing trade were also likely to have been present at this time.

In 1687 a State Post Office opened in the village. It became a stop off point for the Royal Mail to Ireland. The journey from London to Little Brickhill was 6 hours. In 1754 a regular coach service commenced between London and Manchester. The 185 mile journey took four and a half days to complete with a stop in Little Brickhill.

During 1676 the passing trade on Watling Street supported a population of 310 people. 1694 marked the opening of a charitable school in Little Brickhill and in the early C18th a Wesleyan chapel was built. By the late 18th century 40 coaches a day passed through the village as did troops marching along Watling Street for whom Little Brickhill was a principal point of rest and accommodation, thus creating further demand for local goods and services. By 1758 there were 69 houses present and by 1801 the population had grown to 385 people.

In 1837 the first section of the London to Birmingham railway opened with a station at Bletchley. The development of the Wolverton works and the attendant employment it brought in combination with a reduction in coach traffic caused a decline in the population of Little Brickhill. This decline in coach traffic in the face of growing competition from the rail network came about despite a realignment of the road north of Model

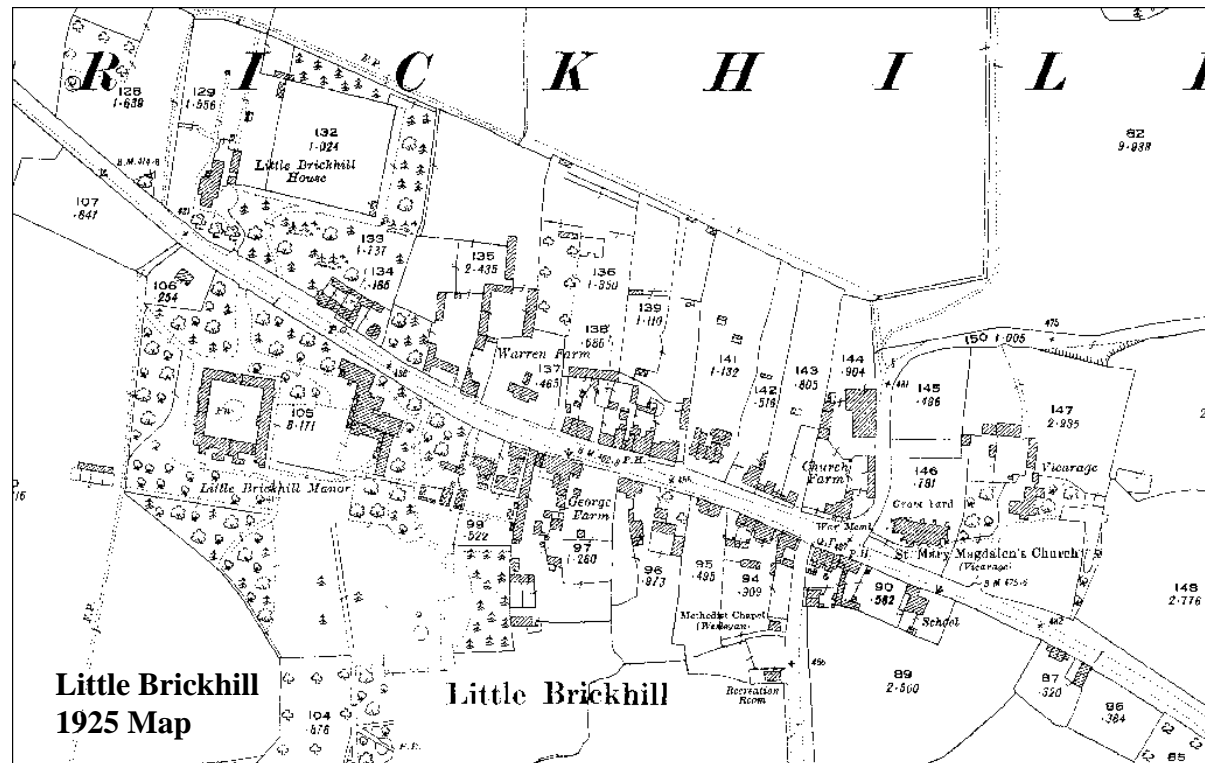
Farm in 1830 by Thomas Telford and a possible regrading of the road's incline as it climbs out of the Ouzel valley. By 1901 the population had dropped to 278.

In the 1840's the Duke of Bedford purchased part of Little Brickhill and its environs adding it to the Woburn Estate. The Estate is still present in the village to this day.

From the mid to late 20th Century through traffic began to increase as the A5 became a major transport route once again. This time however the high numbers and large size of vehicles eventually caused the road's presence to conflict with the essentially domestic, rural environment of the village.

During the 1950's, the road was widened and houses were built at 4, 22 and 24 Great Brickhill Lane. The petrol filling station was built in 1955. Further modern development occurred at the eastern end of the village in the 1960's and 70's with houses built either side of Great Brickhill Lane and the creation in the mid 70's of Wyness Avenue. Despite the growth of the village at this time the long established post office closed in 1975 (although there is now a post office in the village at the Little Brickhill Store) whilst 1974 saw the closure of the village school that had been built in 1840. The 1980's saw more piecemeal development including the creation of Brickhill Manor Court to the western end of the village on the south side of the A5.

In 1992 the historic association of the road and settlement was broken with the opening of the Little Brickhill A5 bypass.



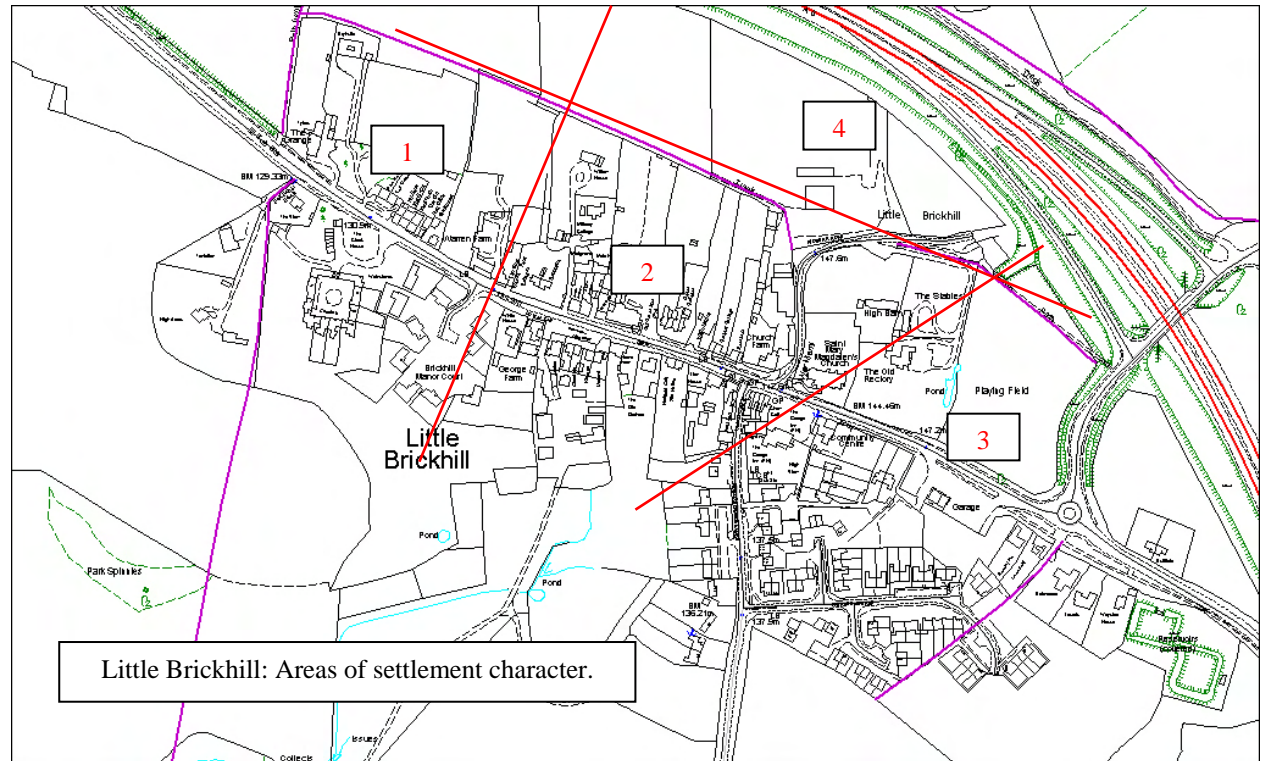
Currently the village is quiet, but retains a number of buildings and spaces that reflect the settlement's (and hence the road's) changing fortunes. The self-sufficiency of Little Brickhill is no more but nevertheless a number of small businesses, guesthouses and inns continue to function. At the time of writing no major new developments are being considered for Little Brickhill beyond the consideration of the designation of the conservation area.

2. Village Appraisal

The Village Appraisal is written with the settlement's history taken into account. Whilst an appreciation of the village's history is vital to understanding its special historic interest, the manner in which the settlement is perceived through spaces, groups of buildings and topography is also important.

The village appraisal and the identification of those features that contribute to its special character are identified by means of a field walking exercise. To allow the document to be used more effectively the conservation area is broken down into three distinct parts with a further section focussing on areas at the village's edges that are accessible by public footpaths.

The village was inspected on foot during July and August 2005 over a series of afternoons.

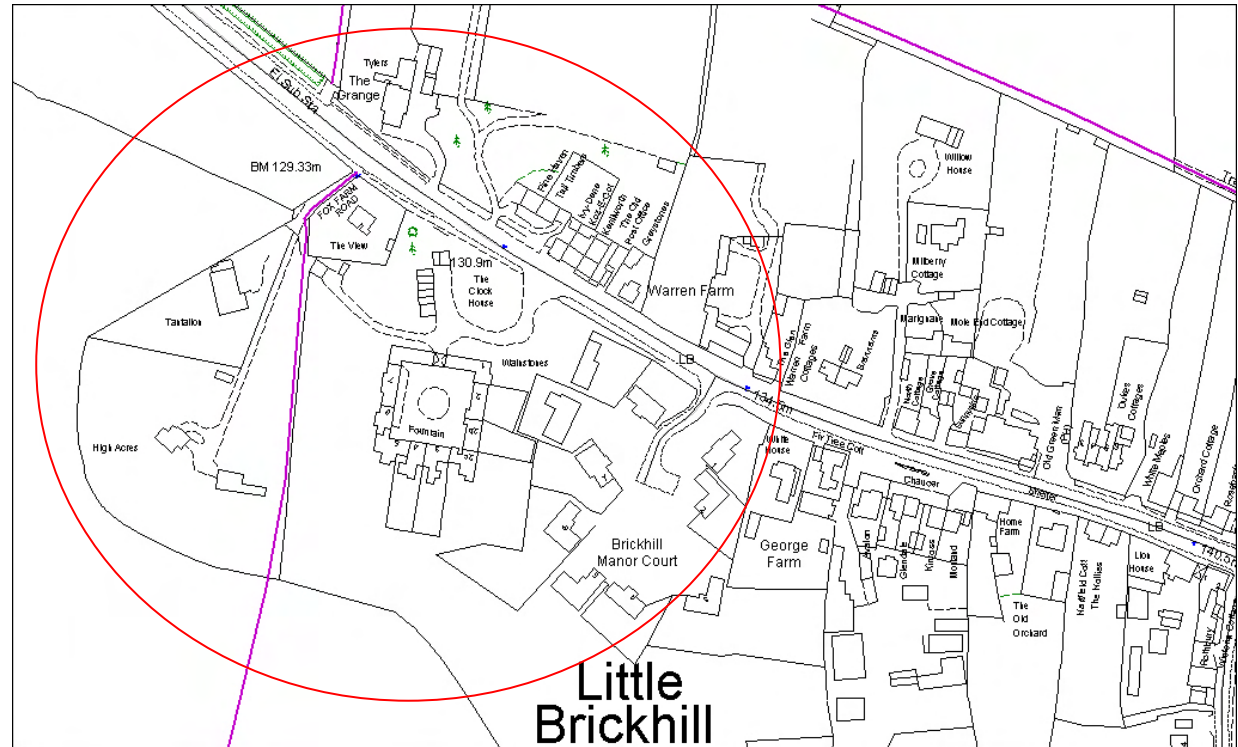


2.1 Settlement Character: Area 1

The appraisal commences beside the A5 as it enters the village from the north west. From this point to The Glen and the eastern boundary of the modern housing development Brickhill Manor Court mark the extent of Area 1.

The most striking characteristics of this part of the village are the views out across the valley over the countryside and Milton Keynes beyond, the view back up the hill into the centre of the village, and finally, the number and size of trees at this point.

In this area the trees, hedges and other greenery almost completely overwhelm the buildings. The Grange, with its high greensand retaining wall on the north side of the road is the only building that succeeds in having a strong presence. The white painted stucco of this imposing, albeit partly obscured, building is visible in the distance from parts of Milton Keynes. All the other buildings, almost exclusively in domestic use, are subordinated by the huge horse-chestnut trees. The trees in combination with hedging and the gardens of the houses lend the area a distinctive, verdant, woodland feel. At the village edge the width of road tarmac and pavement, combined with the northward views, counter the sense of enclosure but (particularly in the Summer) this soon gives way to greenery as one walks south eastwards towards Warren Farm.



On each side of the road, as it enters the village, are two footpaths, one heading immediately into an open field to the north and another, more enclosed, heading south from Fox Farm Road, a driveway leading to two large domestic dwellings (Tantallon and High Acres) both of which are visible from a considerable distance away. This footpath squeezes between the paddocks that appear to belong to High Acres and a close-board fence that bounds The Clockhouse complex, a former stables now converted to flats. Whilst the northward path is described below under Area 4, the southward path is explored now as this first part forms a corner of the village that would otherwise go unexplored.

Walking down the green, thicket lined path out of the village the paddocks to the left are bounded by stock proof fencing with a heavily grazed paddock containing horses. To the right, marking the boundary of The Clockhouse complex there is a high close-boarded fence. The boundary of The Clockhouse is also marked by an impressive line of lime trees that, in combination with the greenery of High Acres' gardens and the now visible fields beyond, provide a distinctly informal semi-rural quality to this low key departure from (or approach to) the village. This footpath and the one described below are both important remnants of a much stronger link between Little Brickhill and its rural hinterland.

The path reaches a stile and beyond lies open countryside. This point of departure or arrival by foot into the village is significantly enhanced by views over neighbouring farmland. The experience is marred by the presence of a large manege that is barren, when not in use, and level across its entire surface. These characteristics contradict the green informality of the neighbouring countryside and suggest an imposed development rather than one that sits neatly with its surroundings. However, the inquisitive and friendly horses kept in the wooded paddocks on the east side of the path add a moment of diversion and company at this location.



The footpath heads out into open fields and, looking back, the dense wooded cover of the village, whilst impressive, makes the village appear hidden and thus divorced from the surrounding countryside.

Returning to the main road the first property on the right (south side) is The View and to the north, as previously described, the imposing presence of The Grange. On the right The View, once a neatly designed symmetrical pair of houses has been extended and rewindowed, losing some of its architectural integrity in the process. A good impression of the type of houses that once stood here is still perceivable however. Both the Grange and The View, in combination with their gardens, make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. Tucked away behind The View is a modern brick built bungalow that forms part of The Clockhouse complex. The building is almost completely shrouded by trees and greenery and is only really visible from the footpath described above, hence its presence within the conservation area is muted. A nineteenth century brick built, low wall fragment still stands, forming a boundary between the bungalow and the garden of The View.

Moving into the densely wooded area one comes to the entrance of 'Bryhulle' hidden amongst the trees on the north side of the road. Identifying the species and condition of individual trees and other important planting that stand at this location lies beyond the scope of this document. However, any proposals for development would need to take particular account of the trees' contribution to the area's special character and any proposed felling would need to be carefully justified and supported by schemes of reinstatement.

Bryhulle itself is reached by the drive that runs behind The Grange, it stands at the end of a long lawn and has a more open aspect as it stands away from the larger trees identified above, it is of C20th origin and is hidden from general view. Although its contribution as a building is neutral the large garden and the trees that edge it are a positive feature within the conservation area. To the east of Bryhulle is a rough or wild area with dispersed conifers standing along its southern boundary. These trees form a distinctive backdrop to the eight houses that run from Pinehaven to Greystones. On the north side of this area is a ruinous but characterful brick wall. Within the area are floor platforms of the former chicken farm barns that once stood here. These features are important reminders of a lost agricultural use in this location which, in turn (judging by historic maps), was superimposed on the site of the former walled garden of Little Brickhill House. Indeed the house and its gardens may provide the key to understanding the nature of the vegetation in this vicinity.

The disused former walled garden area and other pasture and domestic gardens along the village's northern flank combine to form a rural backdrop that comes right up to and into the village. Any development here could encroach upon the sense of spaciousness and greenery that these features create.

On the south side of the road is the leafy entrance to The Clockhouse. The Clockhouse is set well back from the road and almost completely hidden from view by trees and foliage and so makes little contribution as a building to the public experience of the conservation area. However, the building is an impressive former stable block that once formed part of the Little Brickhill Manor complex and gardens and is thus suggestive of the size and status of the now lost house. Again the trees and planting play a decisive role in creating a lush character for this part of the conservation area. The building itself, although not visible from public space remains an asset to the conservation area. To the north east of The Clock House stands a large, modern, plainly designed house that is of little merit in terms of contribution to the special historic character of the village.

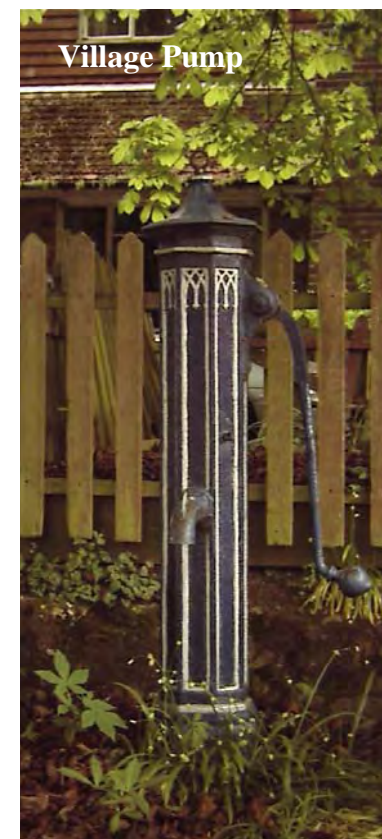
On the other side of the road, adjacent to the entrance to Bryhulle, are two semi detached late C20th (c1970?) dwellings which are almost completely overshadowed by 3 enormous horse chestnut trees. The rather incongruous location and modern design of the houses is at odds with the conservation area, however, they are not highly visible because of the cover provided by the trees.

The restored village pump stands in front of the new houses and is a valuable piece of historic street furniture. Forming the boundary between the pavement and the houses is a dilapidated iron fence that would benefit from refurbishment.

Standing a few yards uphill is a row of mid to late C19th housing, some with brick chequer board patterning and/or interesting Edwardian porch and bay window detailing. The row has a quaint charm to it but, perhaps more significantly, in the C19th the row marked the beginning of the village prior to the construction of Little Brickhill Manor and The Grange. Also located at the eastern end of the row is the former post office but this building is a later construction to that described as being built in the late C17th. Nonetheless, this row is a key element within the conservation area.

Beyond the terrace stands Greystones, a significant building because it is constructed from the local greensand stone. Again, this is a key building within the conservation area.

Beside Greystones and overshadowed by a large horse chestnut is a curious gap which from early maps appears to have been dug, possibly for clay, for use in building the adjacent Warren Farm, rather than being the site of a lost building. The continued existence of this feature is interesting both because of the perspective it may provide on



historic rural self-sufficiency and because, latterly, it allows a direct green link to the fields beyond the village. This association with the settlement and the countryside around it is an important consideration and where it survives, as here, the part such features play in establishing character should be recognised and given due weight in assessing developments that may affect future existence.

On the east side of the 'clay pit' then, stands the imposing Jacobean styled Warren Farmhouse. The house is grade II listed and is thought to have origins in the late 17th century. The house may have been the location for the assize courts once held in the village. The roadside face has been redone in Victorian redbrick but the house incorporates greensand rubble stone and is known to be partially timber frame. Warren Farm is no longer in agricultural use but the building continues to speak eloquently of the provision enjoyed by some of those engaged in farming. The outbuildings are not visible from public space but it may be that there are other buildings within the complex that are important to understanding the history and development of the village. As a whole the farmhouse and remaining complex make a unique and significant contribution to the conservation area.

Opposite Warren Farmhouse is Brickhill Manor Court, a modern housing development which does not contribute to the historic character of the conservation area. The close board fence that defines the development's roadside boundary and the wide standardised visibility splay for the access road are obtrusive and 'urban estate' in character. The neat gardens and planting however, augment the greenness that is such a feature of this part of Little Brickhill.

Returning to the north side of the road and to the east of Warren Farmhouse is 'The Glen', probably of mid to late C19th origin the house is again principally of brick with an unusual half hip gambrel roof. The roof, doors and windows appear to survive intact despite the building's unlisted status. The Glen is also interesting because the busy nursery located there brings with it plenty of cheerful daytime activity. At this point area 1 ends and the more open spaces and older parts of the village commence.



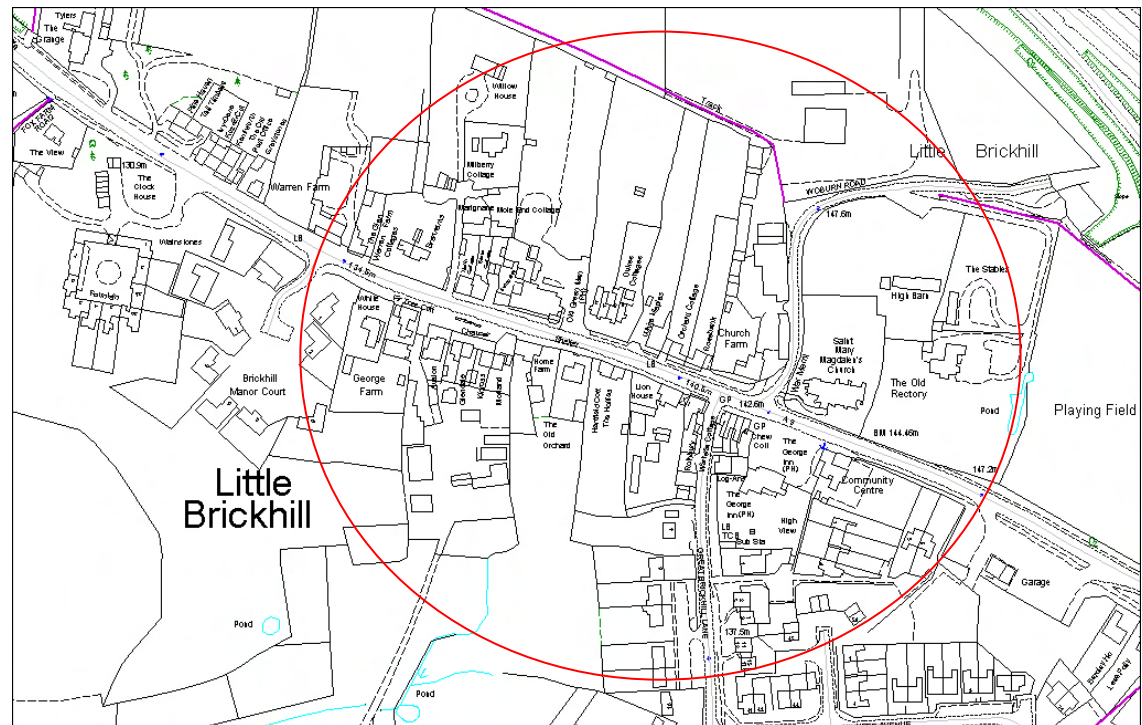
2.2 Settlement Character: Area 2

Area 2 covers that part of the part of the village from The Glen to the community centre and includes the former Woburn Road which leaves the village between Church Farm and St Mary's Church. It is the core area of the village and contains some of the oldest buildings to survive; a number of these are listed.

Although the settlement form looks straightforward there are one or two diversions from the linear pattern that add considerable interest to the village. Also, in general terms, the aspect of this area is more open due to the lack of large trees. Perhaps because the trees are absent, road noise from the new A5 seems to intrude noticeably at times. The line of the road through the village is, once again, a dominant feature but no historic surfacing materials were noted in this part of the village, or for that matter in any other area,

but this is not to say that they are not present under the comprehensive covering of tarmac. A characteristic of the topography makes itself more evident here in that the land on the north side of the road rises making buildings away from the road more dominant or visible behind those that stand on the road side. On the south side of the road the land falls away giving in places views out over the surrounding countryside. The road itself continues its steady climb eastwards to the church and beyond. During the times that visits were made to the village there was a light flow of traffic with vehicles passing only from time to time. Although generally quiet, the businesses that are present in this area seemed to attract a regular trade and hence the village is by no means deserted in the middle of the day.

Walking from Area 1 into Area 2 the first buildings are 'Warren Farm Cottages' on the north side of the road and The White House on the south. Walking up the hill the Warren Farm cottages are set on rising land behind a brick C19th retaining wall. The original design of the houses has been compromised to a degree by new windows and at least one ground floor extension on the main front with bricks that do not match the



apparently high quality red brick used in the original construction. The cottages are set in less manicured gardens than are found elsewhere and, on the west side, allow views beyond of a large, old stone barn in the background, its presence again enhanced by its position on the rising land behind the houses.

Between The Warren Farm Cottages and North Cottage is a track that leads up to Willow House, Milberry Cottage, Marignane and Mole End Cottage. The drive and the turning spaces at the top have an enclosed, leafy quality although this gives way for the gardens of Willow House which has a large neatly laid out lawn area. Map evidence suggests that none of the houses is earlier than 1900 but this tightly grouped collection of houses and gardens is still a characterful corner of the village. The entrance to the drive leading to the houses has not been constructed to highway specification and is hence less intrusive than other modern driveways that have appeared in the village.



Adjacent to the drive are North Cottage, Grove Cottage, Sunnyside and finally the Old Green Man public house. These buildings form an important group, they are all listed and are amongst the oldest surviving properties in the village. The imposing roadside frontages contribute significantly to the character of the conservation area. All are painted creamy pale off white or soft yellow or have a white stucco finish to the roadside frontages although on other visible faces traces of timber framed construction are evident. North Cottage and Grove Cottage have new windows and the roofing material is modern tile. An interesting gable end view of Marignane and Mole End Cottage is visible through a gap between Grove Cottage and Sunnyside. Sunnyside itself has survived in a relatively unaltered state with original or early doors and windows apparently intact. The roof is a later replacement. This cottage in combination with The Old Green Man, where windows and doors again survive, forms perhaps the most intact run of historic street frontages in the village. The north western end of The Old Green Man appears to be made up of two former dwellings which have been taken over by and heavily adapted internally for public house use. Behind the pub is car parking and a large garden, only part of which is in use as a beer garden. There is an extensive rear plot which, in combination with neighbouring properties to the east effectively brings a great deal of green open space in to the heart of the village. The ongoing use of the Old Green Man as a pub contributes to the sense of benign daytime

activity in the village and its continued presence is a significant historic link to the village's past.

The White House, situated on the other side of the road at the beginning of area 2, is set back from the road; it has been refinished externally in modern stone cladding and has a flat roof ground floor extension. However, all the 1st floor windows appear to be early or original and hence the building is not without some authentic historic character. A bed and breakfast business operates here and as such is an economic asset for the village. Although quite a large house its set back position behind roadside hedges means that its contribution to the conservation area is understated.

Fir Tree Cottage has a more confident presence. Its prominent ground floor bay windows and white painted exterior making it quite a key building in the conservation area. To the east of Fir Tree Cottage are the remnants of the George Farm complex. The farmhouse discernible in the 1900 ordnance survey map is missing, replaced by late C20 semi detached houses which are of no historic merit. Behind them survive some of the old farm buildings which are of interest and recent additional buildings that house a busy group of businesses and stables. The historic buildings are in sympathetic use and although not inspected in detail are likely to remain reasonably intact. Despite being hidden from the road the businesses here attract a noticeable amount of custom and contribute to the daytime activity in the village. Beyond the farm buildings is open countryside; the survival of the farm buildings and views of open fields are an important reminder of the closer links the village once had with its rural surroundings. These buildings contribute significantly to the special character of the conservation area.

Home Farm, another listed building, is notable for its extensive use of vitreous brick, the only example noted in the village. The character and detailing of Home Farm survives well. Behind the house are some remnant farm buildings or stables which, despite loss of historic roofing material, lend character to the foreground of views out across the neighbouring countryside.

To the east of Home Farm stands a modern dwelling and then there is a run of older buildings up to the corner of the main street with Great Brickhill Lane. Hatfield Cottage and The Hollies are of late C19th origin and have been altered using, in part, common bricks and plastic windows. Beyond them are two listed buildings: Lion House and Wisteria Cottage. Lion House was once an inn and then latterly a shop, it is now, however, in entirely domestic use. The front of the premises are painted a muted blue-grey colour which arguably prevents the building making as positive a contribution to the street scene as it could. A number of original or early windows and doors survive intact on the older parts of the building. Wisteria Cottage is also intact regarding



windows and doors and has a more cheerful presence as it is painted in pale pink and yellow, the difference in colour possibly denoting separate ownerships. The listed buildings have a strong enclosing quality as well as lending considerable character to this part of the conservation area.

Returning to the opposite side of the road, to the east of The Green Man are Dukes Cottages, a neatly designed pair of Edwardian semis, set slightly back from the road behind shrubs and trees. Next to these is White Maples, a Grade II listed building which has modern first floor windows but otherwise seems intact from public space. Next door are the Little Brickhill Stores, which, despite a clumsily contrived bay window addition, works quite well set against the listed building. Outside are a collection of litterbin, post box and a pedestrian crossing with beacons which, on a sunny day at least, rather than seeming to clutter the environment add a splash of colour and interest outside the shop. The shop, which also provides a post office service, appears to have a good passing trade and again is important for creating daytime activity in the village.

To the east of the shop are the plainer and altered yellow brick Orchard Cottage and Rosebank; Orchard Cottage has a fire plaque surviving but its authenticity is questioned. The contribution that these houses could make to the character of the conservation area is arguably undermined by alterations to the front faces of the buildings. Their presence is nevertheless a positive one in terms of establishing and maintaining the character of the conservation area.

Next door to these houses stands the imposing Grade II listed Church Farmhouse. The front face is only of single depth and has a less architecturally refined rear range. The whole building has a significant presence but is overshadowed by St Mary Magdalene. The Greensand church has an odd appearance due to the heavily buttressed and offset tower required perhaps by the steepness of the land on which it is sited. The church is perhaps the key visual focus as one climbs through the village to the highest point. Between the farmhouse and the church is the old road to Bow Brickhill and Woburn. The entrance to the road is framed by the high greensand boundary walls of the church and farmhouse, it then leads on past functional farm buildings to provide access to High Barn, The Stables, the Old Rectory and the large playing fields beyond, to a point where it is severed by the A5 bypass. The character of the former lane out of the village is described in



Church Farmhouse



St Mary Magdalene



part 4. The farm buildings despite their unremarkable appearance are a strong link between the village and surrounding countryside. Working farm buildings in village centres are becoming increasingly rare and although their presence is often understated they are important in creating a sense of genuine rural character, as is the case here.

On the other side of the road runs Great Brickhill Lane, significant if only because this is the last remaining entrance to the village with an unaltered layout or entrance / exit emphasis. Walking down the lane one comes to the Wesleyan Chapel, the current building is of C19 origin although records suggest that a Wesleyan chapel was first built in the C18th. The building survives apparently in an intact, or nearly intact, state; however there are some early signs of neglect. The building has a high cultural significance and, although tucked away should be included in the conservation area boundary. Walking further down Great Brickhill Lane toward

Wyness Avenue there are no buildings of note until the 19th century cottages at the very periphery of the village, although the neat gardens create a pleasant approach along Great Brickhill Lane. The lane takes on attractive rural quality as it leaves the village and provides some pleasant views out.

The buildings on Wyness Avenue are of no historic significance. Returning up to the main road there is a narrow lane leading up to 1 to 6 High View. This area is largely unremarkable but turning up the path leading to the Community Centre past numbers 1 to 4, there is an attractive green space formed by the well tended gardens of the houses. This space is in turn enhanced by the gardens to the rear of The George Inn. The path then gives out onto an austere black top car park that belongs to the Community Centre, formerly the C19th village school building. The coach and horses weather vane on the roof harks back to the historic use of the adjacent road. The building survives well and is a key component of the conservation area. The George Inn is set back, it is a large building and helps to create daytime activity. Its presence, like the Old Green Man is a reminder of the services provided by Little Brickhill in previous heydays of the A5. The building that stands today is of C20th origin. The building and its function, like that of The Old Green Man, are an asset to the village.

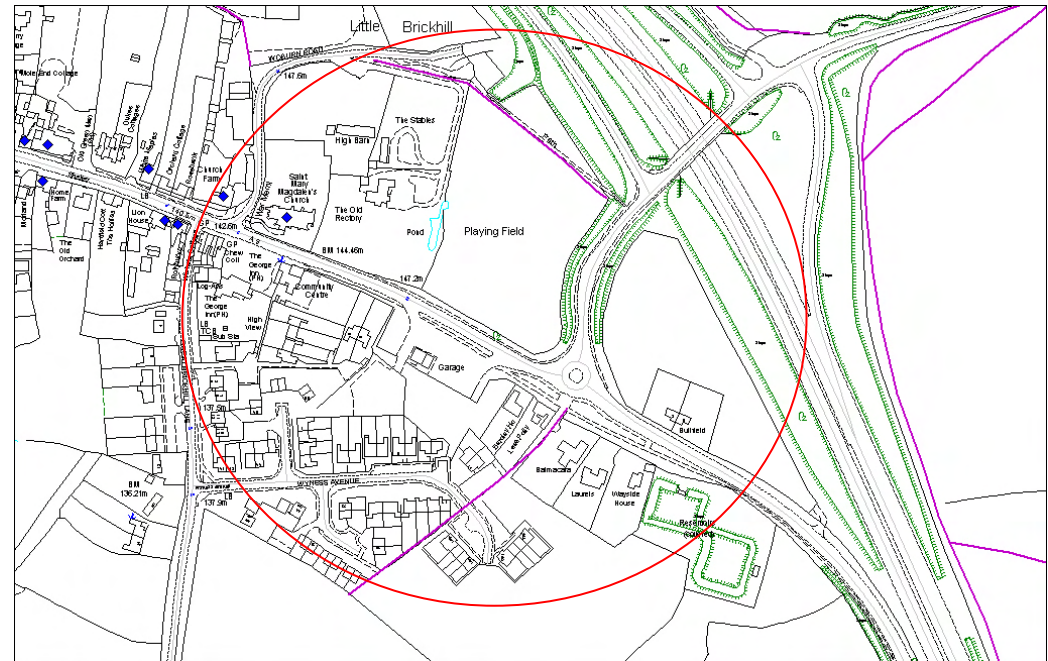


The area around the Church, Community Centre, Church Farm, Little Brickhill Store, the staggered crossroads and the nucleation created by the houses at High View arguably form a central point for the village. Because of the linear character of the settlement however, some dwellings lie a significant distance away.

2.3 Settlement Character: Area 3

This part of the conservation area contains the fewest buildings, none of which are listed. It is also the highest part of the conservation area. Although the area does not appear to be of particular merit, the approaches to the roundabout from the A5 are the first views of the village for many people and there are probably a number of improvement opportunities here that conservation area designation could encourage and support.

Of the buildings it is Lea's Folly that is of principle interest. On the 1920 Ordnance Survey this house is known as Fair Field View whilst on the 1900 map it is The Bull public house. Map evidence for the existence of this building currently available suggests The Bull was in existence by 1880. Its historic position away from the village is interesting, only Battle Hills Farm which could arguably be called part of Little Brickhill lay further out at this time. Standing beside Watling Street The Bull would have no doubt had an early opportunity to draw a considerable amount of trade from passing westbound traffic. As it stands today the former public house retains some of its historic character despite modern windows and a garage extension. The house has been painted pink but this helps the building to stand out to a degree, drawing the eye away from its modern neighbours and surroundings creating a sense from the outset that Little Brickhill is quite a characterful village. The houses at Bull Field are probably 1920's in origin and are quite imposing. No other houses make a significant contribution to the historic character of the conservation area in this location. The playing fields on the north side of the road and the fields behind Bull Field lend a very open character to this part of the village. However the playing fields and the land to the east are closely mown and actually quite bleak. This rather sterile environment is





exacerbated by the standard road layout and traffic island which has been imposed on this part of the village creating a rather harsh urban setting for this key entry point.

The road heading south east from the roundabout ends in a cul de sac where the line of the modern A5 supplants it. Northbound traffic on the A5 can turn off and join this road by means of a short slip which terminates just outside the entrance to Battle Hills Farm and then go on to enter the village, which lies to the north west of this point. There is little to be said for this said of this length of road regarding historic merit, other than that it marks the line of Watling Street. Map evidence shows that a milestone denoting, in 1881, the distance of Fenny Stratford as 2miles and London as 42 miles had changed by 1920 to show Fenny as 2 miles and Dunstable 9miles. By the 1960's this milepost appears to be missing and there is no evidence of its existence today. Benchmarks adjacent to Bull Field indicate a height of 497 ft

which contrasts with 414 ft on the approach to The Grange at the western entrance to the village, a rise of some 83ft.

Near the traffic island by Lea's Folly (The Bull) is a footpath that leads down into Wyness Avenue creating a circular link between Watling Street and Great Brickhill Lane. Heading west from the traffic island the road passes the broad openness of the playing fields to the north and comes to the bleak and unkempt forecourt, building and surrounding land associated with the garage which, on its eastern boundary, has a large mobile phone mast. This area creates a poor introduction to the conservation area but is included within it because of the potential it has for improvement. This is a key approach to the core of the village which lies only a short distance beyond. Numbers 5 and 6 High View on the left are modern semi detached houses. The trees and retaining wall of The Old Rectory and the church in combination with hedges on the other side of the road begin to lend a less austere enclosed feel as one comes further into the village.

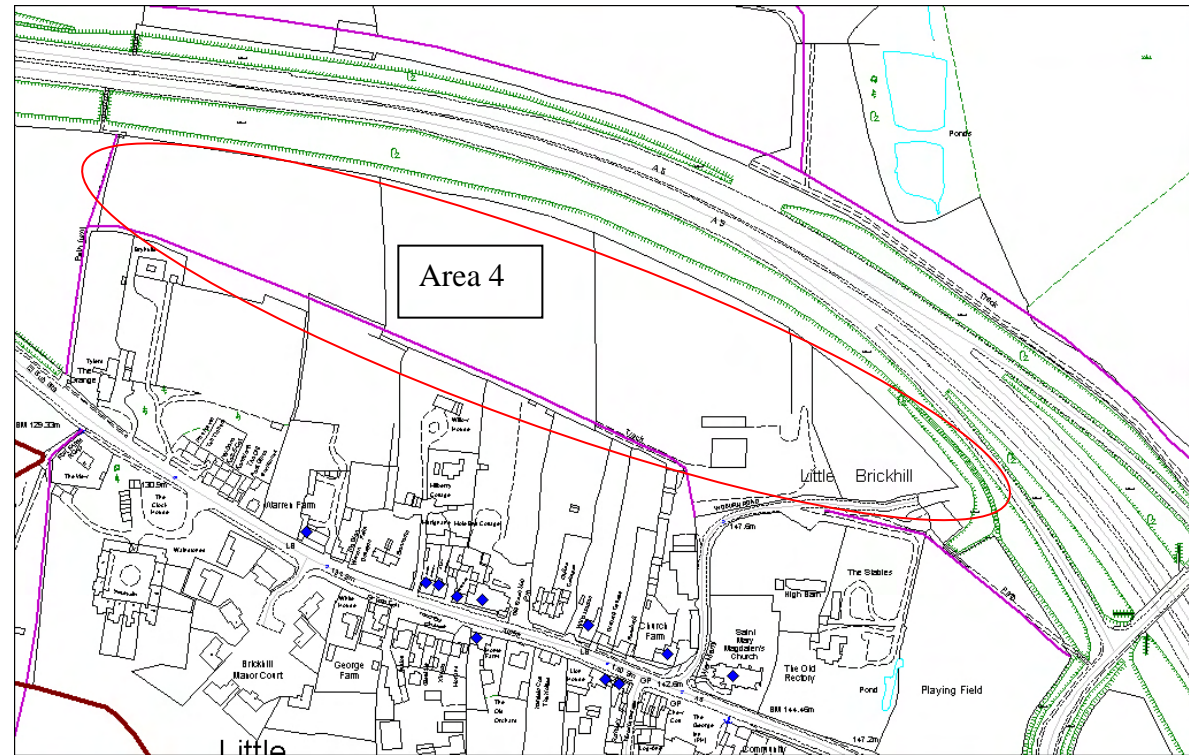
Returning back up the hill to the playing field and walking across the rather featureless exposed expanse, it is clear that there is little to attract people to this area even in high summer other than for weekend or evening sport. To the west the field is bounded by tall trees which obscure the views of The Old Rectory and The Old Stables. The privacy afforded by tree cover to these buildings prevents them making any contribution to the character of the conservation area and they remain uninspected. At the northern end where the footpath joins the truncated Woburn Road there are significant views over open countryside, however road noise from the A5 is significant at this location.

2.4 Settlement Character: Area 4

In addition to the village areas already appraised there is a further significant area behind the gardens of houses on the north side of Watling Street. The area can be reached by footpaths leading from the west flank of The Grange in Area 1, from the Woburn Road and the footpath across the playing field. Area 4 provides an important green space between the village and the A5 as well as significant views out to the surrounding countryside.

Starting at the western end of the village and taking the footpath that leads out beside the retaining wall of The Grange the striking views back to Milton Keynes are immediately obvious. These are supplemented by views across the A5 cutting to the woods on the opposite hillside.

Turning right and following the boundary wall of Bryhulle and beyond, there is rural pasture to the north and views of the trees that are so significant to the character of the western end of the village. Beyond the semi ruinous wall of the old enclosed gardens is an area of grass meadow but it appears to be out of use. There are views here of an old stone built barn also visible from the village centre and, apart from its historical interest, it is also a useful landmark when walking around the village. The barn is apparently disused but is important as a reminder of the farming activity that once took place here. An unusually heavily buttressed stone wall forms the eastern boundary of this meadow and continues to form the northern boundary of Willow House's gardens. Looking north, there are dramatic views of Milton Keynes. At this point an intriguing, isolated fragment of Greensand wall also remains. Beyond here is a stone wall, hedges and trees forming the northern boundary of the large garden plots that belong to the village houses until arriving at the back of Church Farm and the point



where the footpath meets Woburn Road. The area reached by this footpath provides important, easily accessible countryside immediately adjacent to the village boundary and hence is of considerable amenity value.

Walking down the Old Woburn Road from Church Farm gives an impression of a quiet country lane bounded by hedges and mature trees. Unfortunately this terminates prematurely where the A5 bypass severs the road. The space that this creates at the termination of the road is actually quite a pleasant and quiet one. There is a path that leads from here to the playing fields creating a circular walk, which, like others in the village gives depth to the otherwise linear form.

2.5 Village Appraisal: Concluding Comments

For convenience the appraisal split the village into four areas, however it became clear that the four areas also have their own particular character. Having said that, it would be a mistake to see the village as four distinct areas or zones, it is the cumulative effect of all the elements of the village from the smallest details to the contextual setting that combine to create a special, cohesive character that is unique to Little Brickhill.

The conservation area boundary shown in Appendix A: Figure A1 seeks to protect the historically sensitive buildings at the heart of the village whilst acknowledging the contribution and potential of less historically significant areas. The conservation area boundary is not drawn tightly around the built element in recognition of the significant contribution made to the village's setting by the open fields to the north and south.

The elements that combine to create the special character of the conservation area are set out in more detail in the Character Statement below.



3. Character Statement

The character statement in effect sets out the justification for the designation of the conservation area. It distils the appraisal into a series of headings (see below) designed to summarise the special characteristics of Little Brickhill.

Essentially, however, Little Brickhill is a linear village, its present layout reflecting a historic relationship and dependency on the A5. The majority of its key buildings of interest survive from the Georgian and Victorian era although individual plot forms and the general village layout echo earlier times. The character of the village is also fundamentally influenced by its topography, the number of mature trees and green spaces found within and around the village and the presence of significant views. The village is a cohesive entity deriving its significance from all its constituent elements. Thus harm to one aspect of the village's special character could cause harm to the value of the wider historic settlement as a unified entity. Development proposals, conservation area management planning and Local Authority planning decisions should therefore take into account the following criteria supported by the information set out in the preceding village appraisal. The conservation area boundary is shown in Appendix A: Figure A1.

3.1 Location

Little Brickhill's location on the Greensand Ridge provides significant views out across open countryside, particularly to Milton Keynes in the north and Aspley Woods to the north east (see Fig A4). The positions of The Grange, Tantallon and High Acres on the ridge mark the buildings out as important local landmarks. The Greensand stone found in the area is used as a distinctive building material in the village and hence contributes to a local sense of place. Historically Little Brickhill has been associated with the A5 Watling Street. The association with the road has been reduced following the opening of the bypass. The relative peace that the village now enjoys should be respected in future development proposals.

3.2 Historic Development

Little Brickhill is located on the A5 and as a result the village's fortunes have reflected to a significant degree those of the road. The linear arrangement of the village along the line of the A5 is indicative of Watling Street's importance to the village's economy. Although no longer the principal line of Watling Street the broad width of the old road and the linear arrangement of the settlement is a key element of Little Brickhill's character and a significant reminder of the village's origins.

3.3 Historic Buildings

The village's listed historic buildings are principally located at two points, firstly around the Woburn Road / Great Brickhill Lane Junction and secondly, further to the west around The Old Green Man. However, a series of other buildings of historic significance that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, are spread fairly evenly from the Parish Church to The Grange. Building use is now mostly domestic, a series of shops and inns having been lost. The school has also closed but is used as the community centre. Those historic buildings that remain in non-domestic use add, in combination, considerably to the daytime vitality and sense of community evident in the settlement. These include:

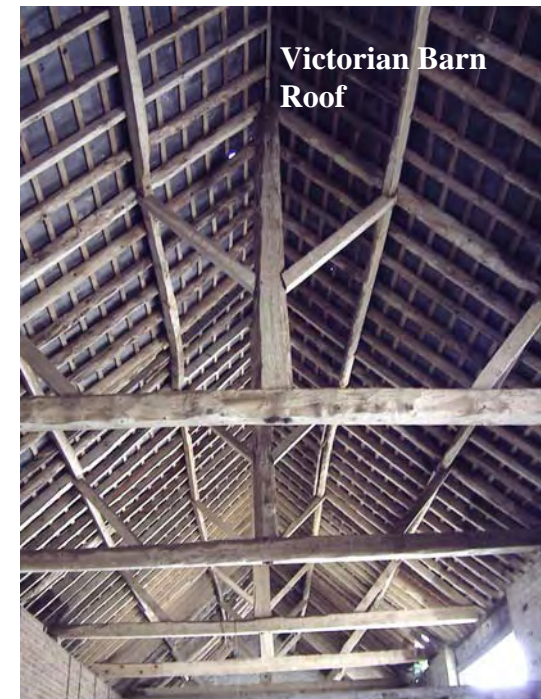
- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. St Mary Magdalene's Church | Grade II | 5. The Glen Day Nursery | Unlisted |
| 2. The Old Green Man Public House | Grade II | 6. Little Brickhill Stores | Unlisted |
| 3. The Old Barns at Church Farm | Unlisted | 7. The Community Centre (Old School) | Unlisted |
| 4. The Whitehouse Bed and Breakfast | Unlisted | | |

Two other significant historic buildings in non-domestic use that contribute to village character are the Methodist Chapel on Great Brickhill Lane and the disused barn north of Warren Farm Cottages. The village's significant historic buildings of all types are illustrated in Appendix A, Figure 2. Efforts to preserve and enhance the conservation area should take particular account of the buildings shown in Figure A2.

The historic buildings in the village tend to be of Georgian or Victorian origin. However, some buildings such as Warren Farm have been refaced and hence disguise older buildings. Careful analysis may be required before potentially harmful alterations are permitted to any pre C20th historic building in the conservation area.

3.4 Building Materials and Local Details

Vernacular building methods and materials are widely evident in the village. These include early bricks, slates and tiles; the local Greensand stone is also a key local material that should be retained wherever possible. A number of historic doors and windows remain on both listed and unlisted buildings. Intriguingly, an old clay pit survives within the village (Area 1). Modern methods and



materials have inevitably infiltrated the historic environment to its detriment and this process should be discouraged. Regrettably no historic paving or road materials were evident in the village but the possibility of survival beneath modern surfacing should be taken into account. No historic road signs or mileposts were noted, however, the refurbished pump is a valuable and characterful piece of historic street furniture.

The vernacular materials and surviving early or original doors, windows etc that do survive add to the sense of character and individuality of place that is evident in the village. Modern standard materials and items will undermine this quality if unchecked. A basic schedule of materials is included in Appendix C.

3.5 Hedges Trees and Green Spaces

Trees make a significant contribution to the western end of the village and its approaches in particular (Figure A3). Important trees are also located along the eastern boundary of The Stables and The Old Rectory and play an important part in establishing the rural nature of Woburn Road and the approach to the village along Great Brickhill Lane. The lime trees and other large trees visible from the footpath that runs between The Clockhouse and Tantallon are also significant. Throughout the conservation area there are well kept gardens and green spaces. Important green spaces accessible to the public include the playing fields and the gardens of The George and The Old Green Man, which arguably are not being used to their full potential. The contribution made by trees, hedges, gardens and publicly accessible green spaces should be preserved and enhanced wherever possible.

3.6 Inter-relationship of Spaces

As the division of the village into four parts for the appraisal suggests, there are different character areas along the length of Watling Street as it passes through the village. There is the very green, well-treed area to the west; the village core with a series of important buildings along the road frontage and, finally, the rather bleaker eastern end. There are also important views from one area to another with the church in particular and the Green Man and neighbouring properties forming particular focal points (Figure A4). The village is not all about the linear relationships however; the circular routes identified in the appraisal lend considerable interest to the village and indeed are a characterful feature of it. The link through from Great Brickhill Lane to Watling Street is quite hidden and fine grain, the link from the playing fields to the former Woburn Road combines openness with the enclosure of the hedges and trees found on Woburn Road whilst the footpath link across the fields to the north is very much about views and open spaces. In combination with these circular links are intriguing spaces off the main road; these include the yard at George Farm and the access road between Brannams and North Cottage to the houses beyond. The quality of these inter-relationships is varied but, in combination, they add significant interest and character to the village.

3.7 Setting and Relationship with Surrounding Countryside

Little Brickhill's principal relationship is with the road that runs through it. The surrounding countryside, although still very much in evidence, and in places pushing close to the heart of the village or with dramatic views across the valley to Milton Keynes (figure A4) still has a sense of being divorced from it. Church Farm and George Farm are strong counters to this assertion as their continuing presence creates an authentic historic inter-relationship between the village and countryside. Conversely, however, the sense of detachment is exacerbated to the north by the proximity and sheer scale of the A5 bypass. It is perhaps the village's many trees echoing the wooded hinterland that forms the strongest link between the character of the village and surrounding landscape. The village is set in a locally designated area of attractive landscape. The local tree preservation orders, the extent of the 'Area of Attractive Landscape' designation and the general tree cover are shown in Appendix A: figure A3a and A3b and Appendix B: Local Plan Policies. Care should be taken to ensure that the village's existing relationship with its surroundings is not undermined further and is wherever possible strengthened.

3.8 Interruptions to Historic Form

In many ways the village pattern is intact, it is still certainly discernible. The lack of traditional through traffic on the former Watling Street actually allows the village to be enjoyed more easily. However the A5, now to the north, intrudes still with, on some occasions, significant amounts of road traffic noise. The new bypass has also broken the historic link with Woburn along the former Woburn Road which now ends in an undistinguished cul-de-sac. The new way into the village from the north is via the rather sterile new road provisions leading from the A5. Other encroachments include the imposed modern cul-de-sac development of Brickhill Manor Court, the houses between George Farm and Home Farm and the Wyness Avenue development, not least because they are contrary to the generally linear nature of the village. The only areas of real detriment to the character of the conservation area are the garage and surrounding land, the telephone mast and the approach to the roundabout, all of which are located at the eastern end of the village.

3.9 Research and Evaluation

Although there has been a detailed appraisal of the village in this document it is acknowledged that information is only partial. There are important buildings and spaces that form part of the village's character for which there is only limited information, typically this is map based. Further desk based research may be sought in future from developers so that the impact of specific proposals on the village's character can be more accurately determined and better informed planning decisions made as a result. Further development-sponsored research will in due course lead to amendment or reaffirmation of the village character statement when the conservation area is reviewed.

4. Conclusions and Next Steps

It is evident from the Village Appraisal and Character Statement that there is sufficient special character in Little Brickhill to warrant conservation area designation. The buildings, spaces, location and history of the village all combine to create a special historically valuable environment that should be preserved and enhanced. The qualities and features described in the character statement need to be widely acknowledged and taken into account if the village is to develop sensitively. However it is vitally important to recognise the contribution that can be made by the local community in supporting and contributing to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.

Following designation of the conservation area the local community may:

1. Give consideration to producing a Village Design Statement to act as a management plan for Little Brickhill. This document could set out design principles for new developments and area improvements based on the acknowledged character of the conservation area and those parts of the village that lie beyond the boundary. The VDS could also include the results of an Urban Design Alliance place check, or similar. The findings of tree and biodiversity surveys might also supplement the VDS. Consideration could be given to adopting the VDS as a supplement to local planning policies.
2. Take advice on and give consideration to an Article 4(2) direction (see Appendix B) to protect the street frontages of historic but unlisted properties. Milton Keynes Council may itself consider the need for an Article 4(2) direction when the conservation area is reviewed.

Designating the conservation area is the first step in an ongoing commitment to manage and conserve the positive attributes of the village and seek solutions to the opportunities that present themselves. Happily, the appraisal of the village confirms that the historic core survives well and retains much that is of historic interest. Nevertheless, in line with the second objective (*see section 1.3 of the Introduction*), the following suggestions are offered as potential means of preserving or improving the conservation area:

1. The eastern approach to the village should be examined to see if the appearance of the modern highway layout and attendant signing could be softened.
2. There should be a presumption against cul-de-sac developments or non-linear developments in the village. Where such schemes *are* permitted provision should be made to retain or allow views and footpath links to the surrounding countryside.

3. Areas of hard landscaping using tarmac should be examined to see if alternative surfacing materials are appropriate. Future resurfacing of highway land should take into account the possibility of surviving historic materials and give consideration to their reinstatement. There should be a presumption against further areas of hard landscaping or hard standing.
4. Historic or architecturally significant walls should be preserved. There should be a presumption against their partial or complete demolition. Close board fences or other modern means of enclosure should be discouraged within the conservation area.
5. The means by which the playing field and truncated Woburn Road can be brought into more regular use should be given consideration.
6. Street lighting and signing strategies should take account of the character of the conservation area and take particular care not to intrude upon it.
7. Preferences for reusing the garage site should be considered in anticipation of the land becoming available for redevelopment.

As stated at the outset the purpose of conservation area designation is not to stifle development or growth but to ensure that it acknowledges and complements the special character that the village possesses. The information contained in this document is the first step in the process of seeking to ensure that Little Brickhill is properly prepared for the future and thus take full and proper advantage of its potential and the opportunities that come the village's way.

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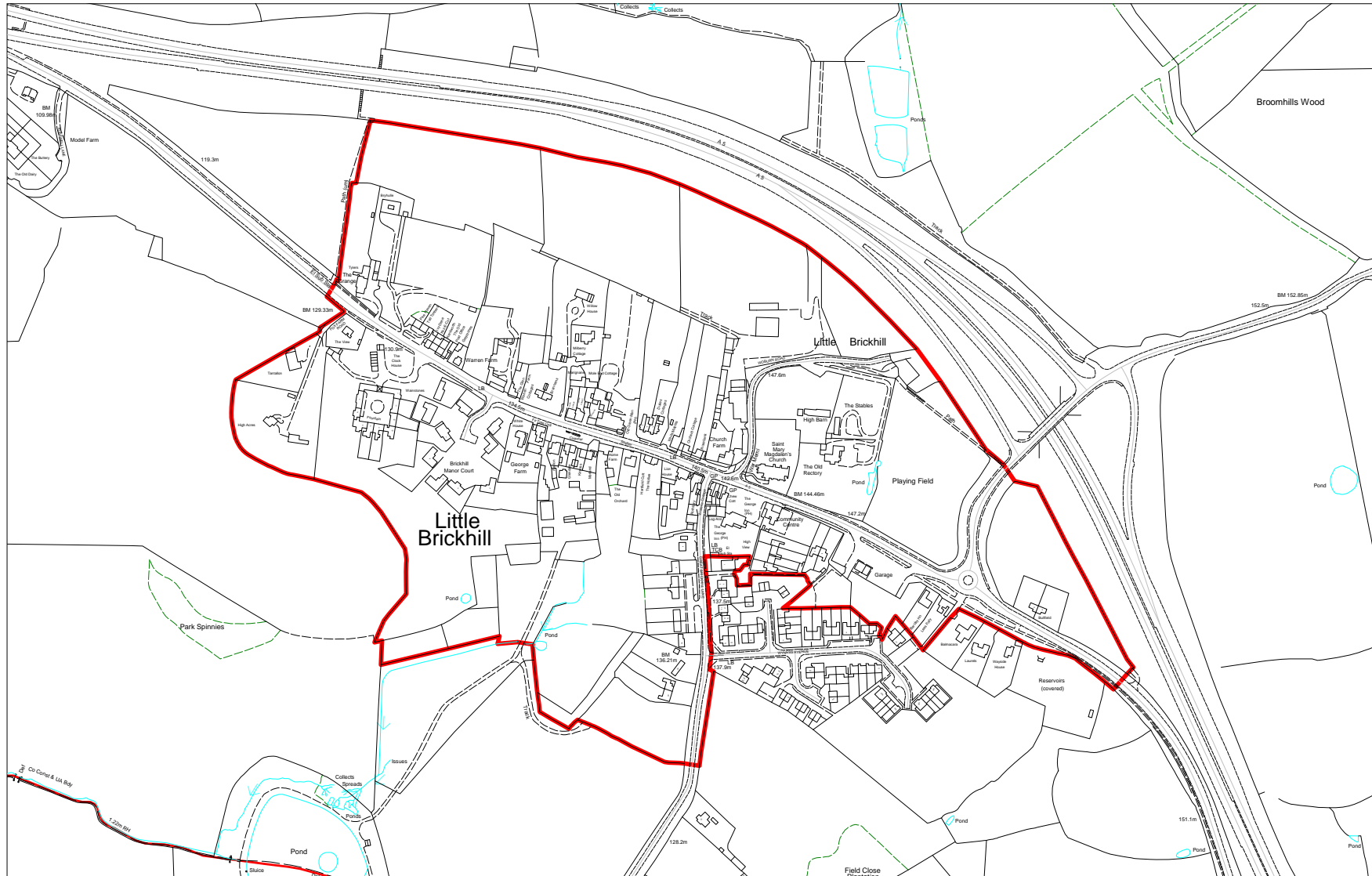
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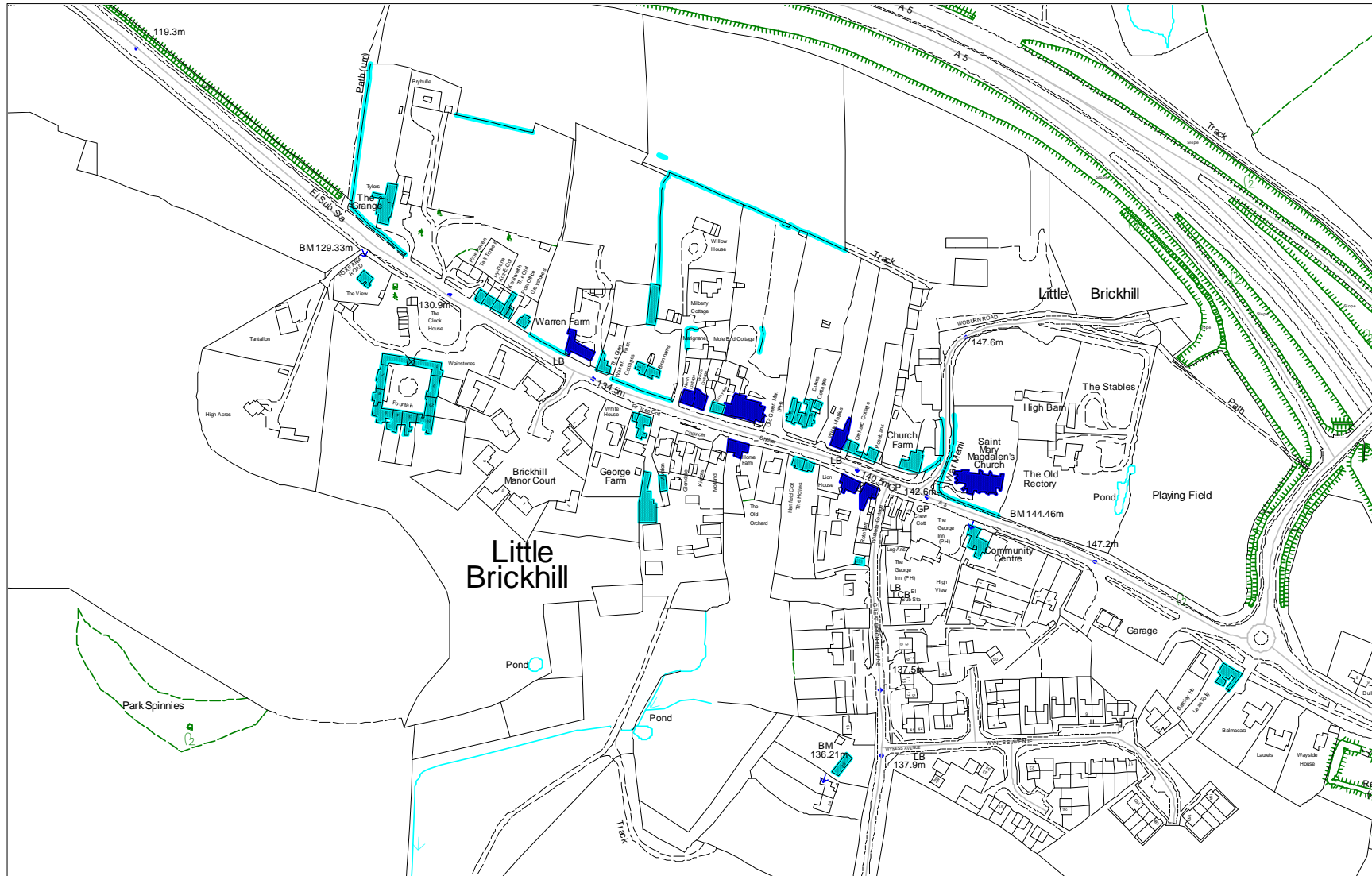
Acknowledgements

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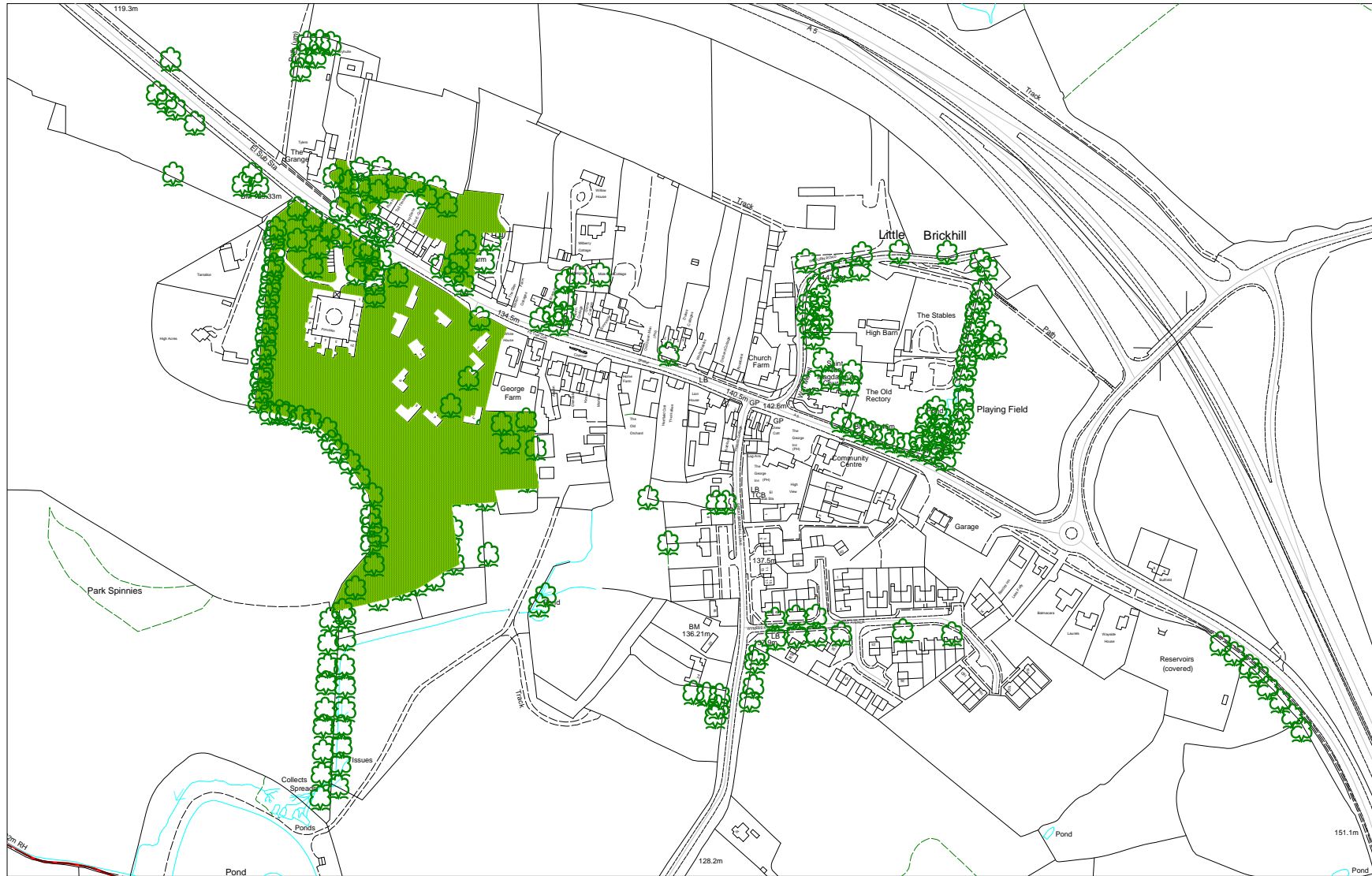
Appendix A: Figure A1 - Conservation Area Boundary (See also A3 fold out)



Appendix A: Figure A2 - Significant Historic Buildings. (Dark Blue Shading Indicates a Listed Building)



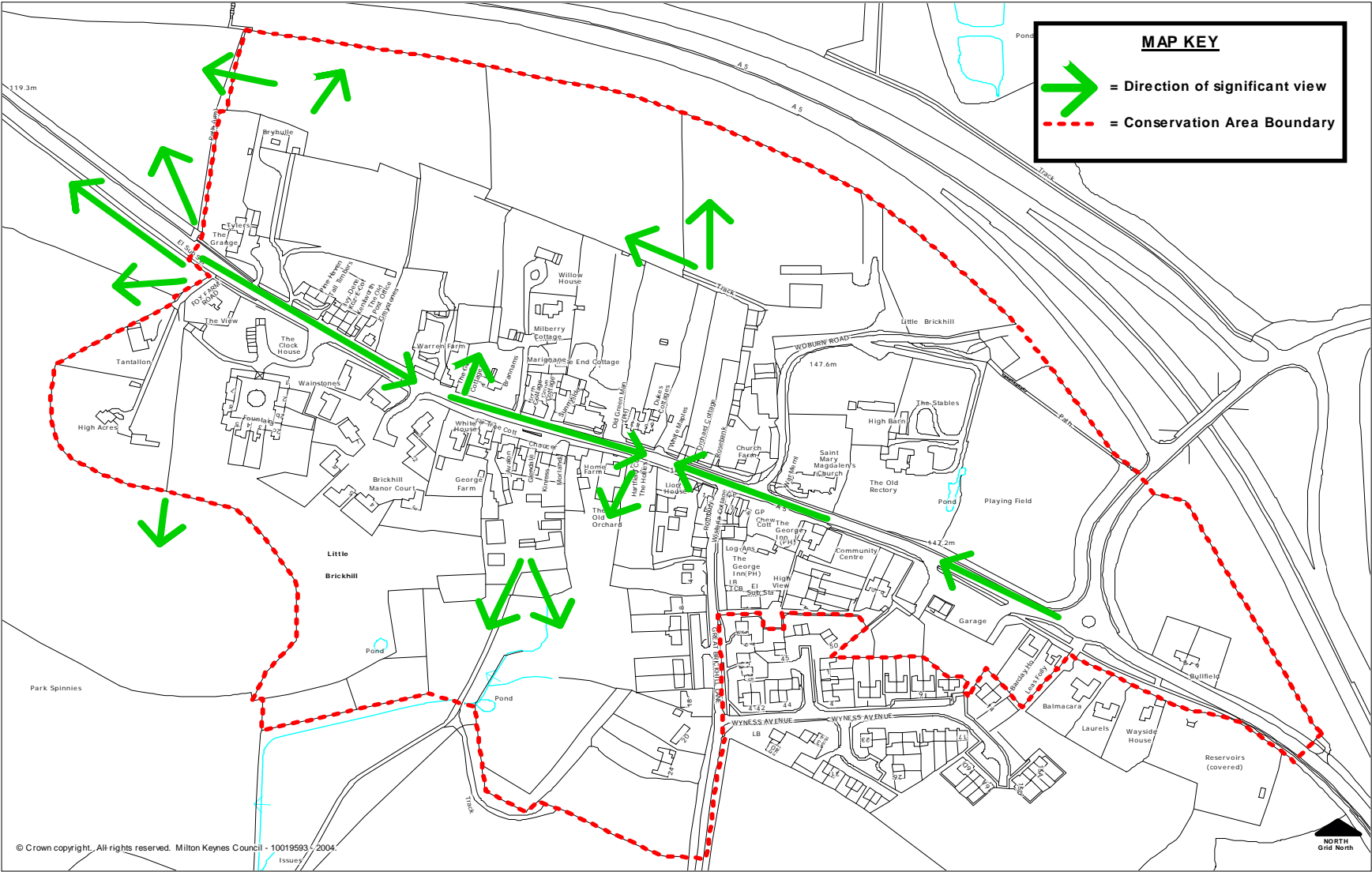
Appendix A: Figure A3a - Significant Trees and Areas of Trees Identified in the Appraisal



Appendix A: Figure A3b - Significant Trees and Areas of Trees – aerial photo



Appendix A: Figure A4 - Significant Views



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Appendix B: Local Plan Policies

The following policy relates to the conservation area designation:

CONSERVATION AREAS

POLICY HE6

Development proposals within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

The criteria used to assess such proposals are set out in English Heritage Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (1995); and interpreted in Character Statements for specific Conservation Areas.

Full planning applications will be required for all proposals in Conservation Areas, including detailed plans and elevations showing the new development in its setting. Conservation consent for demolition will be refused for buildings or features that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, unless the proposed redevelopment would enhance the character of the area.

The statutory powers under which conservation area policies and provisions operate is provided by the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. There are several consequences arising specifically from conservation area designation, notably:

- 1 The demolition of certain buildings will require conservation Area Consent.
2. It becomes an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot, or to damage or wilfully damage or destroy a tree without the consent of the Planning Authority.
3. The Authority is under a duty pursuant to **Section 71** to formulate and publish proposals for the enhancement and preservation of the area.

4. There is a duty to pay special attention to a Designated area when exercising powers under the Historic Buildings & Ancient Monuments Act 1953.
5. Those planning applications that affect the character or appearance of the conservation area must be advertised publicly.
6. Certain permitted development rights are more restricted.
7. Specific statutory duties are imposed on telecommunication operators.
8. The right to display certain types of illuminated advertisement is excluded.
9. Grants and loans for the preservation or enhancement of conservation areas are available.

Policies relating to Design, Areas of Attractive Landscape, Open Countryside and Listed Buildings already apply. The details of policies relating to these designations are contained in the Milton Keynes Local Plan. Listed buildings are illustrated in Appendix A2, the areas covered by Tree Preservation Orders and Area of Attractive Landscape designation are illustrated below:

Appendix B: Local Plan Policies

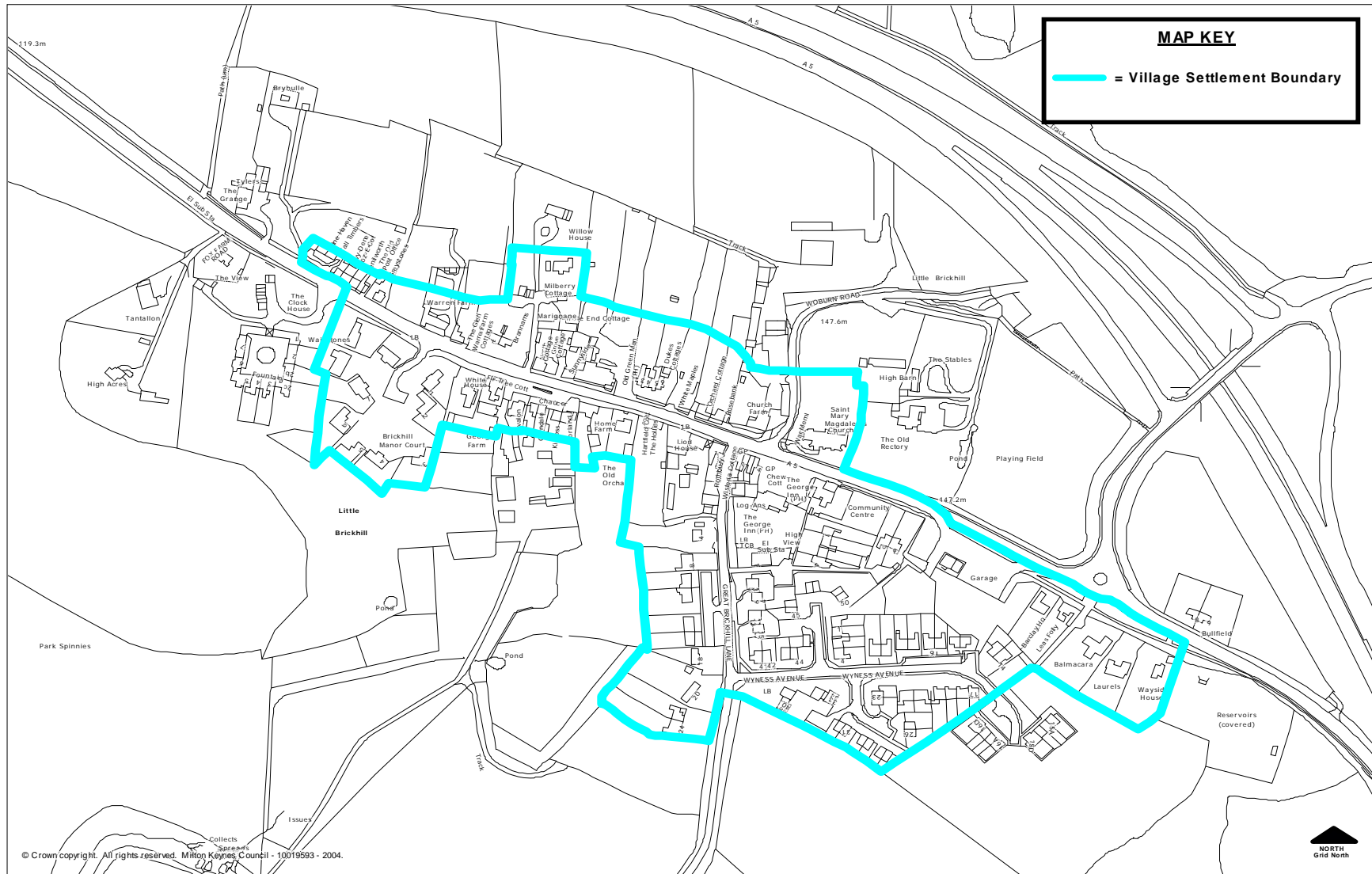
Areas Covered by Tree Preservation Orders



Area Covered by Area Of Attractive Landscape Designation



Appendix B: Local Plan Policies
Area Covered by Settlement Boundary (Beyond Which Open Countryside Policies Apply)



Appendix B

Article 4 Directions:

Property owners can normally make minor alterations to their houses without requiring planning permission. This is called "permitted development". However, in some areas, notably in Conservation Areas, the Council may remove these "permitted development rights" by making an Article 4(2) Direction.

Article 4 Directions are made under part of the planning legislation called the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. The effect of a Direction on a dwelling house is that planning permission is required for specified classes of works that are carried out on any elevation facing a highway. These may include:

- making any alteration to the roof - this includes replacing the slates or tiles, putting in a rooflight or altering dormer windows (the insertion of dormer windows requires planning permission in any event).
- removal, replacement or alteration of windows and doors.
- painting the render or brickwork on walls.
- Boundary walls or railings

The purpose of an Article 4(2) Direction is to act as further protection for authentic historic features located within a conservation area by bringing their proposed loss or alteration under planning control. For Little Brickhill further assessment of the village and the specific ways in which it has already changed, and continues to change, would need to be analysed so that potential ongoing erosion to the existing special historic character can be identified and, if necessary, guarded against. An Article 4(2) Direction has not been sought for Little Brickhill as part of the current conservation area designation because there is a reasonable level of survival for existing features and there is considered only to be a limited threat to their survival. If this situation is considered to be altering the Council may, either when the conservation area is reviewed or by invite from the community, consider designation of an Article 4(2) Direction.

Appendix C: Materials Schedule

A variety of historic building materials are present in Little Brickhill some of which appear to have been locally produced and fashioned and others which, although mass-produced and brought from elsewhere, still lend character and individuality to the village. The following pictures illustrate some of the authentic historic buildings and features found during the field-walking element of the Village Appraisal, and may be used to guide choice of materials and dimensions for new development in the conservation area. The details shown below are not intended to be exhaustive and it is expected that closer research could add more to what is shown below.

Stone:



Greensand masonry, an iron rich stone, is evident throughout the village. The church and a number of retaining walls are built from this material.

Brick:



The first picture shows alternate buff and red brick coursing in an unusual variation of English Bond. Over the windows are rough brick segmental arches and above them is a string course in a recessed dog tooth pattern. The second picture shows vitreous bricks laid in header bond with red brick strips forming the openings and red brick gauged arches.

Timber:



Timber is present in the village as a construction material as these dwellings show. Although refronted, the earlier timber framing is still evident in the gables. Timber was of course a key material for doors, windows, floors, stairs and internal partitions.

Roofs:



The Old School (left) is roofed in Welsh slate with blue ridge tiles whilst the cupola is finished with cedar shingles and surmounted by an iron weather vane. The junction of the roof pitches is lined with lead. At the eaves the bricks are formed into a decorative dentilated pattern. Another material found regularly on the roofs in Little Brickhill are clay tiles of varying ages. Whilst some are comparatively modern there are older examples such as that found on the roof of the late 18th Century White Maples (Grade II listed) shown above right.

Doors and Windows



The imposing front of Church Farm displays three different window designs. On the ground floor are two eight pane hopper windows, on the first floor there are eight over eight vertically hung sliding sashes with two over two margin lights. Above them are three six over six sashes. A similar design is used for the windows on the east face but these windows are smaller than the intended opening. The rear wing has simpler eight pane casement windows, now a rare survival in the village, indeed the authenticity of these windows has not been confirmed. All the windows throughout the building have sills and sit flush with the face of the building, rather than being recessed. The higher status front face of the building has gauged brick flat arches whilst the casement windows have rough brick segmental arches.

The door on the main front seems to be a replacement, based on photographic evidence, but replicates a six panel raised and fielded Georgian door successfully. Over the door is a rectangular transom light. There is a 'stucco door case with plain pilasters, moulded console brackets which support a section of frieze and dentil cornice' (DoE list description).

Doors and Windows:



Farm buildings also have characterful doors and windows; the picture on the left shows how doors tend to be short in relation to their width, this is often the case on farmhouses too (where they tend not to be split), not just stables or barns. The picture on the right shows an iron window, the upper half of which contains 10 panes under a segmental arch whilst the lower half has a sliding 'hit and miss' opening. These windows were particularly used where horses or cattle needed well ventilated space with low light levels, or as here, in a hay barn, where grain was kept. The half and half arrangement is unusual however.

Building Groups in the Conservation Area:

A number of important building groups exist that lend particular character to the conservation area. Some of these are set out below:



The picture on the left shows just how significant brick is to establishing the character of the conservation area. In combination the roadside appearance of Warren Farmhouse and The Glen is dramatic. In the second picture The Green Man and neighbouring properties to the west form a collection of some of the oldest and most characterful buildings in the village.

Building Groups (cont)



The collection of buildings around the junction of Great Brickhill Lane and Woburn road with Watling Street arguably forms the heart of the village. Included in this group are Warren Farmhouse and the church. Although not of particular historic or architectural merit, Little Brickhill Stores add an important splash of colour and activity to this quarter of the village. A number of authentic doors and windows have been lost on some of the Victorian terraces but nevertheless the overall historic form of the village survives quite well here.

Building Groups (cont)



This terrace group forms a characterful row at the western threshold of the village.

Throughout the village there are characterful features, individual buildings and groups of buildings that in combination create a distinctive sense of place. The lack of inclusion here is not intended to indicate that a building etc does not make a contribution. A more extensive review of the village's special, authentic, historic and architectural features may be a project that the parish could undertake in due course.