

Bradwell Conservation Area Review

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Conservation & Archaeology

This document is to be read in conjunction with the
General Information Document available on line



House on Vicarage Road, Bradwell

Historical Background

Bradwell (sometimes referred to as Old Bradwell) once lay in open countryside, its buildings arranged around a loop off the western side of Loughton Road at its junction with Common Lane and Primrose Lane.

The core of the village may once have been a green which was subsequently subdivided into small enclosures before being used partly, then wholly, as a horticultural nursery during the mid-C20th. Following new town designation the open nursery space was filled by late C20th housing developments. One of these, Nursery Gardens, has arranged the houses in such a way as to retain a piece of open land so that although much reduced there is some reference back to the village's historic green open core.

The listed buildings in Bradwell are shown on the principal features map below and include St Lawrence church (listed grade II*) for which Pevsner suggests a likely date of c1200 for its origins¹. Not shown on the principal features map is the Priory of St Mary founded in 1154² of which only the Chapel of our Lady remains. The Priory sits beyond the conservation area boundary to the west and there is no evidence that it had any effect on the village's present day architectural or historic character or appearance.

In addition to the church, the village's listed buildings include Bradwell House (listed grade II*) which is of eighteenth century appearance in dark orange brick, set behind a tall brick wall. Elsewhere a selection of farm buildings and cottage dwellings make up the bulk of the listed buildings.

Lying within the conservation area a few metres to the north east of the church are the remnants of a motte and bailey fortification. On the western flank of the conservation area is a medieval moated site, although the original house has gone having been replaced by Moat House of 1784. Both sites are designated scheduled ancient monuments.

Until the development of Milton Keynes, Bradwell was located in a comparatively isolated rural context. Wolverton could be reached by a lane that once led

northward from the west end of Primrose Lane. The village was linked to Watling Street at Loughton, with the Bradwell Road commencing at the junction by the Talbot Inn. From this junction the road's historic route (it is now fragmented) led northward through Loughton, past the east side of Bradwell, where it is known as Loughton Road, to connect with the Newport Road a short distance north of the New Inn at New Bradwell. This road then connects Newport Pagnell to Stony Stratford.

From the crossroads formed with the east end of Primrose Lane's junction with Loughton Road, Common Lane led eastward from Bradwell to Little Woolstone. This lane gave access to open fields and higher clayland pastures. It also led directly to the Saxon Hundred meeting place at Secklow Mound.

By the time of the 1880 ordnance survey 25in map Bradwell is shown as having at least one village based farm (Manor Farm), a school, a vicarage, a post office, three public houses, a smithy and an independent chapel. Some modestly scaled C19th housing had also been built amongst older stone and thatch vernacular labourers' cottages. Whilst not free of hardships one can reasonably suppose that the village economy was relatively buoyant at this time.

The 1880 map also shows a near intact parliamentary enclosure landscape surrounding the village with only the London and North Western Railway, which sits atop a substantial embankment at this point, superimposed upon it. It is these fields and land around Bradwell that would primarily have sustained village life.

Contemporary maps and aerial photographs show much changed circumstances with modern suburban housing estates and commercial and light industrial buildings all set amidst looping road layouts encircling the settlement. The village has been subsumed into Milton Keynes, the name Bradwell being given to a grid square formed by the new town's distinctive road network.

¹ Pevsner N, Williamson E (1994) *Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*, Yale University Press

² Pevsner N, Williamson E, *Ibid*

Dominant building styles, materials and details

The great majority of Bradwell's surviving older buildings are plain and robustly built vernacular cottages and converted former farm buildings, mostly built from local stone. The British Geological Survey's online 'Geology of Britain Viewer'³ confirms that along the line of the Loughton Brook Blisworth limestone lies close to the surface, a stone which lends itself to general building but is not easily carved for detailed ornament.

In contrast however, Bradwell House demonstrates early proficiency with brick which appears to be locally made and used to impart a degree of elegance in the form of classical embellishment and configuration for the principal face of the building which is partly hidden from general view by a tall boundary wall. The clay for the brick would be in plentiful supply but the actual location of manufacture is not known.

Traditional local roofing materials would have included clay tiles fired alongside bricks and also straw for thatch, both materials imparting a distinctive character to the locality.

Timber, glass and lead would have been the main materials for early doors and windows, each one tending to be made bespoke rather than to standard sizes.

Iron too would have been in evidence for incidental features and details around the village but not for major structural elements, other than for wall restraining bars and plates. The presence of iron boot scrapes, bollards and railings is very rare in Bradwell now. An exception are the ornamental iron gates (grade II listed) to the churchyard. They are heavily restored but remain a good example of the workmanship of E & H Roberts of Deanshanger.

Historic cobbles and kerb stones are also now absent from the village, replaced by modern kerbs and grey / black tarmac surfaces.

The advent of canal and railways led to the decline of locally sourced materials and self-sufficiency and the demise of true vernacular buildings. Better and

cheaper roofing materials, principally slate and later, concrete tile, became available as did mass produced bricks. 'Off the peg' joinery for doors and sash windows in new, brick built terraced housing demonstrate early standardisation in construction. The variety of designs, age and the quality of materials means that significant numbers have survived despite a latter-day tendency to replace in transient plastic versions rather than maintaining and repairing original timber fittings.

Whilst not every building is of sufficient merit to warrant statutory listing there are still those of local interest which either individually or cumulatively contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Failure to mention a specific building, structure or open space in the review does not necessarily mean that it has no part in reinforcing local identity.

Where historic materials and details survive they usually impart a strong sense of character and individuality to the buildings and areas in which they are located.



St Lawrence Church

³ British Geological Survey, www.bgs.ac.uk/data/mapViewers/home.html: Various maps

Statement of special interest for Bradwell Conservation Area

The settlement is a blend of characterful older buildings and new development. Two thatched stone cottages set the tone on the northern approach to the village but the brick built Georgian Manor House with its long boundary wall is the dominant presence. Along Vicarage Lane the mix of old and new and alternating use of stone, brick and render, with slate or thatch, continues on both sides of the road as it falls gently away. The density is quite high and the pavement edge location of many properties tends to push greenery to the background until the junction with the lane leading to the church is reached. Here the gardens, motte, open land and church yard lend an important sense of space whilst the church, listed farmhouse, ornamental gates and terraced cottages with gardens set behind stone walls combine to create a strong sense of local distinctiveness.

The important views within the revised boundary on the principal features map indicate good vantage points from which to appreciate the cumulative nature of the village's character. The northernmost of these, at the junction of Loughton Road with Common Lane and Primrose Lane, provides two contrasting impressions of the village. Firstly, looking southwards down a relatively open view of the meandering line of Loughton Road one is aware of the mix of brick, stone and thatch in particular, with a strong backdrop and intermingled presence of trees and hedges, some of which top distinctive, stout, grey, stone walls. In high summer the greenery of this location tends to be the dominant feature, strongly enhancing the ad hoc variety and positioning of the older dwellings that front onto Loughton Road and which impart a perceptibly rural character to it. Secondly, turning right into Primrose Road, keeping the mottled dark orange brickwork and coursed limestone wall of the house on the corner to the left, the road's gentle downward incline leads into an inviting, enclosing green space created by overhanging trees, high roadside hedgerow and a grassy verge. This green hollow lends verdant charm to the approach to the small cluster of listed stone buildings beyond that comprise Home Farm.

A more diverse collection of buildings in terms of form, materials and use is present in Vicarage Lane. The distinctive and memorable juxtaposition of the village's two surviving pubs, the Prince Albert and the Victoria (both listed Grade II) make a particularly strong contribution to village character. Other more subtle built forms also exist, however, including the poised brick frontage of No 4 Vicarage Road and its attractive tile topped stone boundary wall on the back of the pavement.

At its east end Vicarage Road commences with a Wesleyan Chapel, grey rendered and austere, it is lent some limited cheer through 'Y' tracery timber windows. Here too are a vicarage, a barn and some characterful brick walling establishing in combination a semblance of distinctive character at the threshold of the road's entrance into the body of the village. Views west are enclosed by buildings and are of brick, stone and thatch dwellings.

As one proceeds westward along Vicarage Road and down a slight gradient to the Memorial Hall it is apparent that contemporary development has filled gap sites and back-land plots with varying degrees of success. Amongst one of these, on the south side, is a narrow passage lined by grade II listed brick walls that lead onto a dog-leg on the line of the Loughton Road.

The space at the junction by the Memorial Hall is pleasing despite one or two mishandled renovations which detract from local character. Nevertheless, the collection of Manor Farmhouse and barn, the iron gates to the church yard, stone walls and the cottages set behind long gardens create an appealing, open and characterful grouping.

The church itself is seen in tandem with the scheduled motte in a grassy, park like setting, the combination being very attractive.

Returning, the loop continues round to views out of the conservation area between trees to open land, the embanked railway line providing an abrupt but not unattractive visual stop effectively appearing as a dense row of trees and foliage.

It is this distinctive collection of buildings and spaces that the review seeks to protect.

Management Plan

Proposals for new development should be particularly mindful of the provisions of national and local policies set out in the General Information Document. The appearance and character of the conservation area as it is set out in this review should be demonstrably understood in proposals for new development. Milton Keynes Council (the Council) will expect applications to demonstrate how proposals will sensitively respond to and reinforce local character and distinctiveness.

The Council will normally refuse applications for development that are deemed to be inconsistent with national and local plan policies intended to protect designated conservation areas from insensitive change.

New or replacement buildings within these developments should remain subordinate in scale (height and massing) to the street frontage properties to preserve a sense of hierarchy within the plot.

Planning applications will be required for material alterations to the exteriors of buildings in non-domestic use in the conservation area. For example changes to windows, doors, roofing material will normally be held to be a material change to buildings in non-domestic use that would require planning permission.

There is no article 4 direction withdrawing permitted development rights in Bradwell Conservation Area preventing the loss of original features on unlisted buildings in domestic use and there are no proposals to alter the existing levels of control. However, where deemed appropriate to do so, the LPA may withdraw permitted development rights as part of granting planning permissions for proposals to develop within the conservation area.

New development within the conservation area should consider the extent of spacing and rhythm between buildings and placement within the plot. Parking spaces should be provided in a way which minimises impacts to landscaping to the front of houses or the loss of verges beside the road.

Proposals for development should seek to avoid disruption or loss of historic boundaries unless there are clear and convincing reasons for so doing.

Boundaries within the conservation area are generally rubble stone walling, brick or planted hedge. The use of timber fencing should be resisted.

In line with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 six week's notice must be given to the Local Planning Authority before undertaking works to trees.

New development will be expected to employ good quality materials that are consistent with the historic materials used in the conservation area.

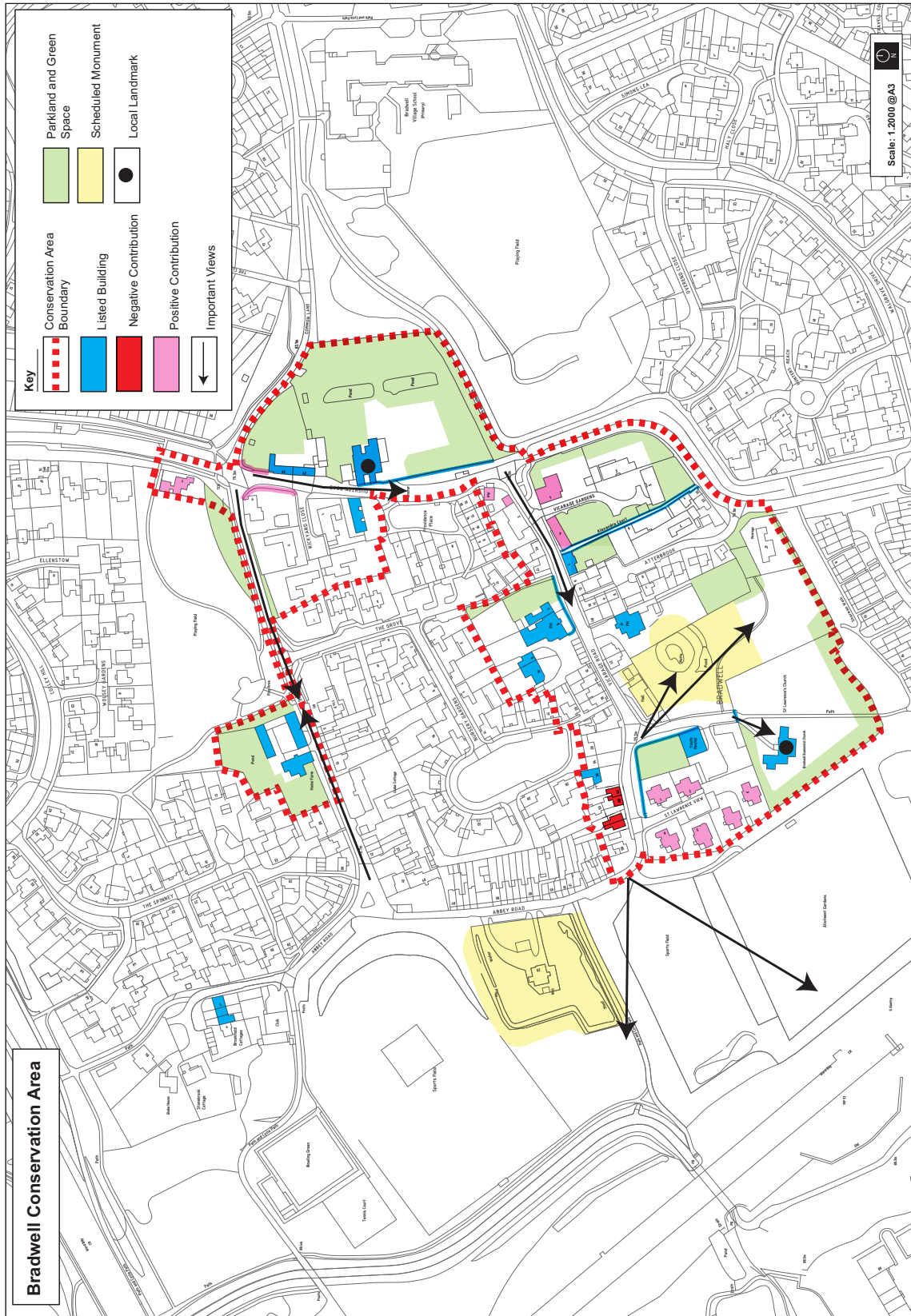
The Council shall give careful consideration to the positive contribution made by remaining open spaces in the conservation area when considering proposals for development within or adjacent to them.

The village's two public houses are important community facilities. Although the conservation area is covered by special advertising controls the Council will be supportive of their need to advertise sympathetically, operate and undertake events that contribute to village life.

The Council shall continue to offer pre-application advice to occupiers of unlisted property in the conservation area in order to avoid unsympathetic, ad hoc choices for replacement or repair of properties and features such as windows or boundary walls.

Accumulations of street furniture or visually intrusive individual items of street furniture will be discouraged. Traffic orders should take account of the sensitive historic environment and use muted colours and minimise applied road surface lines and signing. The Council will seek to encourage utility companies to co-ordinate works and reinstate disturbed road and pavement surfaces sympathetically. Road improvements should avoid 'urbanising' the rural character of the conservation area.

Map 1: Bradwell Conservation Area - Principal Features



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View down Primrose Road to Home Farm Barns



Traditional cottage window

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/conservation-and-archaeology

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