

Great Linford Conservation Area Review

June 2019

Conservation & Archaeology

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



The Manor House, Great Linford

Historical Background

Archaeological investigation suggests that there has been a settlement in the area of the church since late Saxon times. The early settlement lay on a lost section of the existing High Street which seems to have extended down the hill, to where the Manor Ponds now are, before turning westwards to the church and then northwards in the direction of the river Great Ouse where it would once have met with the east-west aligned road connecting Wolverton, Stony Stratford and Newport Pagnell¹. The church and some houses stood on higher ground above the river but, perhaps in response to the marshy nature of the lower ground, the road was diverted eastward from where the Nag's Head now stands, along the brow of the hill, before heading north once more, leaving the church and early settlement isolated. This arrangement became permanent with the inclusion of the lower lying land within Manor Park. Some of those houses associated with the church site probably disappeared soon after the road's redirection whilst the rest were removed circa 1688-9 by Sir William Pritchard who built the first manor house, laid out a park and provided for the almshouses and a school².

The southward line of the High Street from the Nag's Head is perhaps late medieval in origin and extended as far as The Green around which clustered another group of buildings, although nothing is left of these today.

During the C19th two events occurred that had an impact on the appearance of the settlement. In May 1800 the Grand Junction Canal was opened, crossing on an embankment through the northern part of the Manor House's park which then fell out of use. Some 15 years later a branch of the canal was extended to Newport Pagnell and a wharf built at its junction with the main line, a short distance north-eastwards from the main body of the village. In 1867 Newport Pagnell was connected to the railway system by a branch line and a station built just to the north of the canal's main line on the east side of what is now Marsh

Drive. The line of the railway survives as a footpath and cycle way connecting Great Linford with Wolverton and Newport Pagnell.

Since the 1970's there have been further significant changes relating to new town developments in the form of a series of individual housing developments of varying quality that have infilled open land around the newly built St Leger Drive to the west and Marsh Road to the east. The effect has been to conceal most of the former village within the newer developments so that it has to be sought out rather than arrived at just by following a principal route through the grid square.



A view of St Andrew's Church from the canal

¹ Woodfield P /MKDC, *A Guide to the Historic Buildings of Milton Keynes*, (1986) Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

² Pevsner N, Williamson E, *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire* (1994) Yale University Press.

Dominant building styles, materials and details

Great Linford conservation area's existing boundary stretches from Marsh Drive's Junction with the Wolverton Road at the north end to The Green at the southern end of High Street, a distance of just over a kilometre (See Map1). Over this distance are a broad range of buildings in terms of age, use, style and materials. The revised boundary recognises the variety of built forms and the open spaces contained within it and the variations in character that result. The conservation area has therefore been divided into four character areas which share similar characteristics (see Map 2 Great Linford Conservation Area Review: Character Areas).

Starting at the north end, character area 1 contains the parkland and canal side areas. The area includes St Andrew's church, the Manor House, the former rectory and the barns, almshouses and stables that now comprise the Milton Keynes Arts Centre. The line of the canal and the moored boats provide a picturesque northern boundary to the conservation area. Also included are the fragmentary remains of the old wharf side where the lost line of the Newport Pagnell branch and the fall of the locks can still be made out.

Character area 2 is centred on the north end of the High Street and forms the core of the conservation area. The High Street's mix of traditionally built dwellings and other structures evokes a strong sense of a historic village centre.

To the east of High Street is character area 3, newly included in the conservation area. The circular cricket field, tree planting and carefully designed houses combine to create an attractive village extension. The houses on the east flank of the field were built 1978-81 by architects MacCormack, Jamieson & Pritchard and remain largely unaltered in a maturing green landscape setting.

At the southern end of High Street is character area 4 where the now narrow confined tree lined road abruptly opens out onto a large green, itself also enclosed by trees. From its south eastern corner is a cul-de-sac, Harpers Lane, where there is a cluster of

stone built farmhouses and former barns

These four zones each have their own prevailing character and so each is discussed in turn as a separate character area with its own distinguishing characteristics.

Generally across the conservation area the prevailing walling material tends to be local Blisworth limestone laid to courses, with later buildings in brick first produced locally but then more standardised and from further afield. There is also occasional weatherboarding. Roofing materials are predominantly clay tile and, later, Welsh slate. There are thatched roofs here and there on older buildings. All domestic properties have brick chimneys. Almost all houses are set within their own plots apart from some short terrace rows along High Street which have a back of pavement position. Windows and doors are of wood with casement windows in lower status or older property and functional buildings and vertically hung, multi-pane, sliding sash windows on later Georgian and Victorian houses from the C18th and C19th.

In the first character area which is centred on the park and its constituent buildings, stone is the main walling material with only brick facings on the rear of



Great Linford High Street

the rectory being the exception. The majority of roofs are plain clay tile but with a large thatched barn in traditional long straw and later slate used on the Manor House. The Manor House, almshouses and stables all display conscientious references to formal architectural styles but are built from local materials. This circumstance lends a unique local charm to the appearance of these eye catching buildings. The barn and former rectory are more rugged in appearance, albeit with later Swinfen Harris additions (in the form of an unusual timber canted bay oriel window supported by timber stilts) to the front face of the rectory.

The church is an important local landmark. It is an aisled church with C12 Origins built of stone with a buttressed tower at the west end. It is positioned on a slight eminence from where it dominates the park.

Throughout the park are runs of stone walls dividing plots and acting as retaining walls where levels change abruptly. Some of these walls are individually listed at grade II. The park is entered on the south side from High Street through white painted wrought iron gates with railings. From here the expansive and attractive open spaces of the park, populated by mature trees and formal architecture of the principal house, can be appreciated. This is one of the most

attractive and distinctive spaces in the borough and adds much to the overall character of the conservation area.

From the canal towpath there are important views of the church, almshouses and the Nag's Head in the distance. The trees and general overhanging foliage combined with the boats reflected in the water add to the picturesque charm of the locality. Heading east along the canal one comes to the departure point of the now lost Newport Pagnell branch. This area is much altered and new development and building conversions have had a considerable impact on the historic character of the location. However the fall of land, the presence of a former lock keeper's cottage and the Old Wharf House, previously an inn still convey an impression of the lost wharf and canal junction's layout.

The second character area and the most varied is the High Street. Here are found the Nag's Head public house, the school with its open sided thatched barn, a chapel, former farmhouses and outbuildings with a number of modestly scaled houses fronting onto the road. There is also a long, solidly built, brick wall that runs southwards from Glebe House to Newman's Close. Wide grass verges and garden or parkland trees, either close at hand or in the distance, combine pleasantly with weathered stone, brick or tile to create a strong sense of a rural village street. This is heightened by houses of various ages and styles, and glimpses of former farm buildings or cottages in the plots behind the main thoroughfare.

The third character area includes the carefully designed new housing on Cottisford Crescent and that part of Deerfern Close overlooking the open ground of the cricket pitch. A distinctive grade II listed weatherboarded store with a thatch roof also stands on the western side of this character area lending it an important historic reference.

Leaving the High Street via an avenue of horse chestnut trees and passing the store on the left one emerges onto a large circular open space with trees dotted around its perimeter on which the village cricket pitch is located. Turning to look back to the



Nag's Head public house

High Street it is evident that the formally laid out principal front of Glebe house has been intentionally framed by the avenue when this space was created³.

On the left is the group of C20th houses that comprise 3 and 4 Deerfern Close and 51, 57 and 57 High Street which have been designed and placed to convey the appearance of a traditionally built group of houses looking out over the open space.

Lending further interest are the low silhouettes of 14 distinctive houses on Cottisford crescent designed by MacCormack, Jamieson and Pritchard placed around the east side of the circular green. The style is gently modernist set amongst a shared semi mature, almost wilderness like, landscaping with retained and planted trees interleaved amongst the gardens. The houses have shallow pitch concrete tile roofs, deep overhanging eaves with a glazed apex to provide their interiors with natural light. The main part of the houses re-interprets the timber framing tradition of the area whilst the upper windows are lent emphasis by unusual cantilevered framing. Outshots in brick, timber and large panes of glass add further interest to the built forms. The quality derived from the

inventive and cohesive forms and layout of the houses overlooking the cricket ground and their integration with the village is sufficiently good for them to form a new character area to be included within the wider conservation area.

The fourth character area lies beyond the junction of High Street and Woad Lane. Walking southward one encounters firstly the picture postcard prettiness of The Cottage and The Stables after which follow the fairly everyday housing on Church Farm Crescent. Their presence is mitigated by the presence of mature, if unkempt, trees, hedges and shrubs and the increasingly attractive forward views of The Green. This attractive open space, free from playground equipment and other incidental clutter, is fringed at its far end by some modern dwellings. Turning leftward and eastward to follow the line of the old lane to Willen, now a footpath, one arrives at an attractive grouping of farm houses and converted outbuildings, partly diluted by some indifferent modern additions, but with a reedy pond as a focal point. The prevailing character is of a sheltered rural lane overlooked by robust stone farm buildings.



Deerfern houses

³ Great Linford Conservation Area Character Statement ,Milton Keynes Council (November 1995)

Statement of Special Interest

The cumulative character of Great Linford Conservation Area is derived from the interaction of, and the contrasts between, four component character areas each with their own distinctive attributes. In collection the impression is of a linear village on a north south alignment set on a gentle incline rising from the ornamental park at the north end to the spacious open triangular green at the southern end. The mix and arrangement of buildings combined with locally sourced stone, brick, tile and thatch and the blend of vernacular and formal detailing contribute to the village's pleasant and predominantly rural character.

Key buildings within the conservation area are the Manor House, the church and the Arts Centre group which includes a large thatched barn and the particularly fine almshouses and distinctive pair of stables. The setting of these buildings in parkland heightens their visual appeal considerably. There are important views across the park of the buildings and the embanked canal on the northern perimeter which can often be picked out by the presence of moored narrowboats. Although not prominently placed the Rectory also contributes to the sense of long standing affluent rural gentility.

From the white painted metal railings of the park's south entrance the view south of the Nag's Head PH, and upwards into the spacious High Street, provides strong first impressions of the central section of the conservation area. A harmonious mixture of barns cottages and handsome houses all compete for the eye's attention. At the point where the grade II listed telephone box and the old pillar box stand the rural character of the High Street is at its strongest. Opposite these eye-catching pieces of historic street furniture is a collection of informally built farm-workers cottages and Windmill Farmhouse. The prevailing walling material is brick with some stone interleaved here and there. The roofs are predominantly clay tile or Welsh slate. At numbers 25, 23 and 21 the clay tiles match the colour of the brick cottages emphasising the presence of the

houses as a block of colour in the street scene. Windmill Farmhouse and numbers 24/26 opposite show evidence of being raised in height with several courses of brick lying above a stone ground floor, leading one to surmise that both may once have been thatched.

The whitewashed brick of number 27 and stone of number 14, whilst not encouraged as exterior treatments, add further variety to the constituent blocks of colour in the street.

Views out of the High Street area are generally absent but there is the occasional yard, cottage or recent C20th development set back behind the roadside building lines. Elsewhere the dovecote and the thatched cottage in Rivet's Yard are hidden from general view on private land. The exception is the stone and tile of Church Farm with its pronounced weatherboard gable which can be glimpsed at the end of a drive that lies between the school and 14 High Street. A path leading to the cricket pitch provides a quiet green retreat from the High Street.



The conspicuously placed primary school is the last significant contributor to local character, it is of two phases and much altered but still conveys something of the dignified restraint in appearance that matches its historic use.

The social housing north of the Woad Lane junction is of limited architectural or historic merit but the well-kept gardens contribute much in terms of general greenery. Chapel Cottage and the heavily altered 4 High Street contribute some historic character but it is the leafy approach to The Green, reached by passing The Cottage and The Stables that next commands attention. The Green comes as a surprise for the first time visitor, being concealed at the very south of High Street. From here it is a short walk to

the former farm houses of The Mead and Grange Farm and their buildings. This is a characterful tightly enclosed space with the historic stone and thatched buildings arranged around a pond. Modern housing developments have had a mixed impact on the location but overall the historic character still prevails.

The conservation area is lent further interest by the presence of the canal and rail line which is now used as a cycle way and footpath, the sites of the old wharf and the former station platform and one or two older buildings lend this area its distinctive character.



Glebe House

Management Plan

The public house, at the core of the village and the conservation area provides interest and activity as well as ensuring a suitable, viable use for a listed building. Provision of contextually sensitive advertising material and outdoor uses of the public house will normally be supported by the council.

The council will encourage the preservation of historic boundaries within the conservation area. Proposals that interrupt existing open views of properties across parkland or gardens will be resisted.

The council will encourage new development to respect and preserve existing building lines in order to ensure that existing buildings that contribute positively to local character remain prominent in the street scene.

The loss of front gardens to parking will be resisted. Where possible, access to new parking should be designed to ensure that street side property boundaries are retained to the greatest extent possible.

Whilst there are a variety of boundaries within the conservation area close-boarded fencing is generally absent. The council will encourage boundary treatments that follow those of adjacent buildings where they reinforce local character. With the exception of character area 3 (Cricket Ground), the use of close boarded fencing and metal railings will normally be discouraged.

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

Extensions should be unobtrusive and clearly defer to the principal building in order to preserve historic plan forms and built scale (height and massing) and will respect the character of the different types of housing within the village. The spaces between houses provide views of planting behind the houses so side extensions and increases in roof volume should be resisted.

The council will encourage proposals or initiatives

that would improve sites or buildings that detract from the character of the conservation area.

There is limited evidence of loft conversions within the conservation area. However, an Article 4 Direction should be considered to ensure the front planes of roofs remain clear of dormers or roof lights for all existing buildings. The council acknowledges that recessed and surface mounted rooflights are a distinctive, original feature of the houses on Cottisford Crescent and, as such, do not set a precedent for use elsewhere.

Where deemed appropriate to do so, the LPA may withdraw permitted development rights as part of granting new planning permissions for proposals to develop within the conservation area.

Schemes that result in the loss of chimneys to unlisted buildings within the conservation area should be resisted.

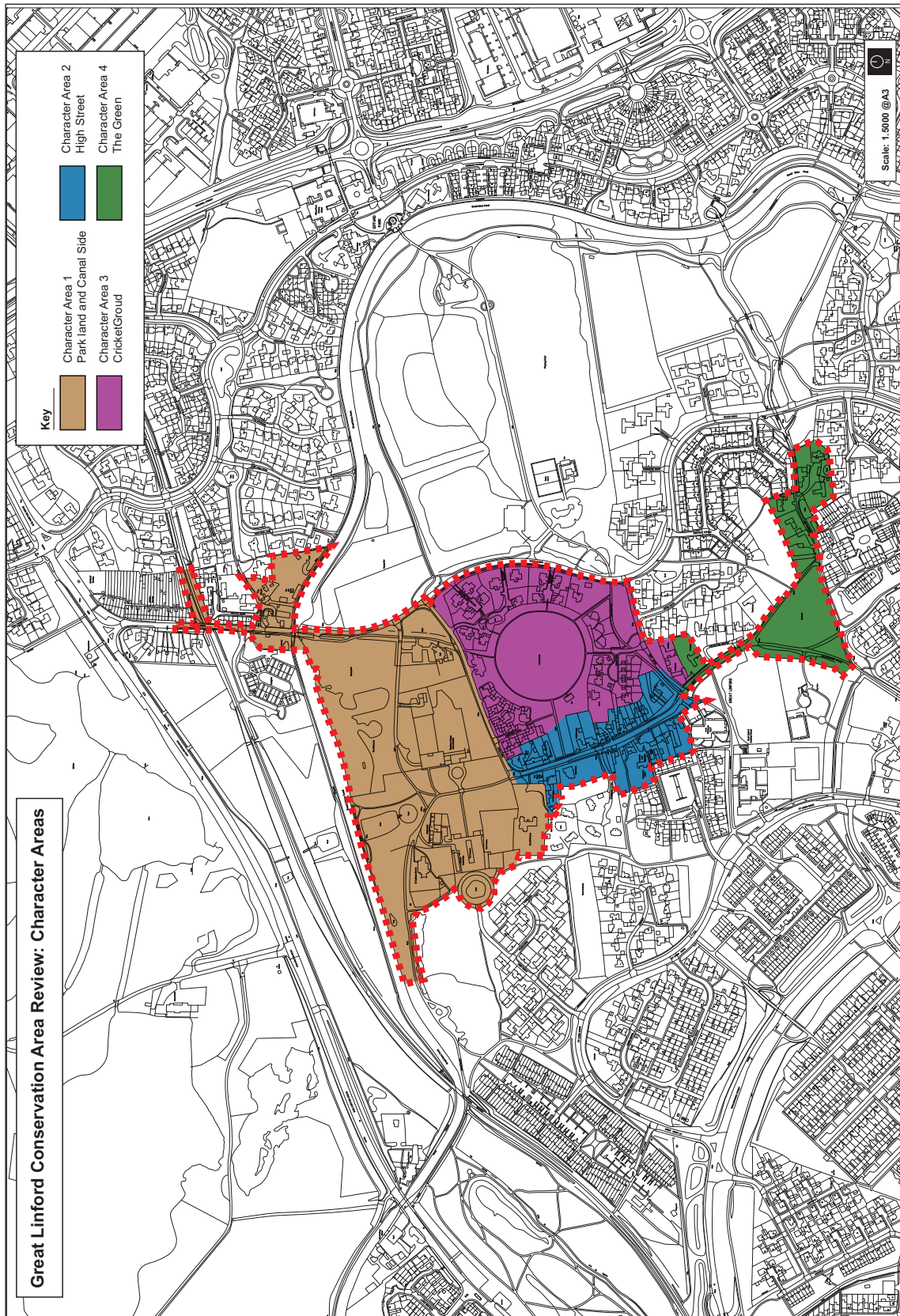


Linford Dovecote

Map 1: Great Linford Conservation Area Boundary Principal Features



Map 2: Great Linford Conservation Area Review: Character Areas



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Houses on Cottisford Crescent

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

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