

Milton Keynes Village Conservation Area Review

June 2019

Conservation & Archaeology

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



**Timber frame and thatch cottage, Walton Road,
Milton Keynes village**

Historical Background

The village was recorded as Midelstone in the Domesday survey with the main manor in the parish being held by Godric Cratel. By the C12th and into the late C13th the manor was one of several held by the Cahaines family from which the name 'Keynes' was derived.

The historic village is centred on the small triangular green at the three way junction of Broughton Road, Willen Road and Walton Road, with the Swan Inn providing a focal point overlooking the intersection. The main through road ran north-south and linked Willen and Newport Pagnell with Walton, Fenny Stratford and Simpson¹. A road from Wavendon which crossed over ridge and furrow to the south and east of the settlement is known to have existed but was lost within open fields that had been enclosed by 1585.

The settlement pattern around this central point remains relatively dispersed but the roads soon lead to newer denser C20th New Town residential areas to the north and north-west, east and south-east.

There is no record of Milton (or Midelstone) for nearly a century after Domesday but All Saints Church located to the north of the village centre has a chancel arch dating from c1200 with the rest identified as dating from c1330²; the remains of a moat and traces of fish-ponds lying to the west of the church mark the site of an ancient manor-house and its ponds, called the Pondwykes in 1418.

Early domestic buildings in Milton Keynes include No 22 Broughton Road (Bird's Cottage), possibly an early, modestly proportioned, manor house of c1300 belonging to a branch of the Cahaines family, it is of cruck and timber frame construction with a thatch roof. The survival of smoke blackening to the underside of the thatch roof suggests the house was once a single space hall heated by an open fire without a chimney.

At 4 and 5 stands the Old Post Office with origins in the C14th and C15th with C17th additions. Here again are early timber cruck and frame construction methods and evidence of smoke blackening. These

buildings provide important evidence about medieval building techniques and are amongst the earliest buildings in the borough. Later buildings include Brook, Manor, Southside and Home Farmhouses of the C17th and C18th and the Old Rectory built between 1693 and 1723 on the site of an earlier rectory. Elsewhere there are examples of farmworkers and labourers cottages dating from the C18th and C19th and further examples of timber framing (including The Swan public house) from the C17th and C18th³.

Ridge and furrow fields surrounded the village in the medieval period. Enclosure began as early as 1566 and was largely complete by 1685. The manor passed through the hands of several families before being sold to the Society of Merchant Venturers in the early C20th who built several dwellings in the village. Following the designation of the New Town in 1967 the land held by the Merchant Venturers was acquired by the Development Corporation and the modern context of the village was created.



The Swan Inn

¹ Croft R, Mynard D, *The Changing Landscape of Milton Keynes* (1993) Buckinghamshire Archaeology Society

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

³ Woodfield P /MKDC, *A Guide to the Historic Buildings of Milton Keynes*, (1986) Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

Dominant building styles, materials and details

Designated and non-designated heritage assets (see 'Principal Features' map) are spread throughout the Conservation Area, but nearly all front onto, or are adjacent to, the village's three main historic roads.

Those that don't are at least still partly visible from public vantage points or sit beside connecting footpaths within the settlement. All the pre-C20th buildings in the settlement and, frequently, their garden settings, make an important contribution to the leafy open rural character that still prevails within the conservation area.

In addition, several other listed timber-framed cottages dot the conservation area. They are typically some 300 hundred to 400 years old with construction materials, such as timber, straw and tile likely to have been sourced very close to the village. Windows tend to be small multi-pane timber casement style and with low doors. Chimneys are of brick set over thatch roofs which once were long-straw but tend now to be of other non-traditional materials such as Norfolk reed or combed wheat. An impact of the change in thatching material has been to introduce ornamental block cut ridges on buildings that were hitherto free of decoration. Although the village's timber-framed cottages originated as basic accommodation their outward appearance is quaintly charming, imparting a considerable degree of character to the conservation area.

Later C19th workers' cottages on Broughton Road (for example numbers 1, 2, 6 and 7 now 1 and 2 Broughton Road) are double-fronted and were built as pairs in decorative red brick with gable stacks. They stand within extensive plots with generous front gardens, Welsh slate roofs and panelled door and timber casement window details. Opposite is a detached brick cottage of similar date and detailing, only this time instead of slate red clay tile is used for the roof. The terrace row at 27 to 30 Broughton Row and Sunnyside to the north of the church on Willen Road all reinforce the presence of restrained early to mid-Victorian building methods and detailing.

Sunnyside, unlisted but probably dating from the early to mid C19th is built using orange brick in

Flemish bond (alternating the short and long side of bricks to create a cruciform pattern) and with a red clay tile roof has canted bays at ground floor which may be a later addition. Of particular note are the delicately perforated ridge tiles topping the roof, the elegance of which contrast with rather uneventful detailing elsewhere. An earlier example of domestic architecture is the grade II listed Southside Farmhouse on Walton Road. A substantial detached house built principally of red brick in Flemish Bond with diaper work (where the short ends of brick are burnt black to pick out their presence in the masonry), in five bays and outwardly of early C19th origin. Oddly for an otherwise symmetrical frontage the door is offset to the south in the second bay demonstrating that an earlier house of C17th origin has been refaced. The house is also distinguished by 5 tall dormer windows set in a red clay tile roof. More accomplished still is the brick and clay tile Old Rectory (GII) of late C17th origin and the most imposing house in the village. The house's classical influences are discernible in the modillion cornice and pediment on the 5 bay principal frontage. The 6 over 6 pane sash windows have broader profile Georgian glazing bars.

The ornamental brickwork is also heightened by red brick dressings to pick out corners and around the windows. South of the Old Rectory is the Victorian former school room once in brick but this time with stone dressings lending emphasis to the doors and windows .

There are also two interesting weather-boarded buildings: the Granary at Southside Farm, built in the 17th or 18th century, which is raised on brick staddle stones and has a slated roof, and the Barn to East of Birds Cottage, an 18th century timber-framed construction with a half-hipped thatched roof. Outside of the barn is a brick-lined saw pit.

Whilst many of the Victorian brick buildings and the Old Rectory demonstrate a detailed understanding of layout and proportions and use quality materials, the C20th contributions are less convincing. Instead they tend to create a sharp contrast to the rural character through introducing suburban forms and details into

the conservation area. Examples from the late 1940's relate to the ownership of land within the village by the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol.

The Merchant Venturers developed houses in double-fronted semi-detached pairs of red brick with red clay tile roofs and central and gable end chimney stacks. The houses are marked with one terracotta plaque to each pair. The houses stand in generous plots set well back from the street and have a variety of boundary treatments, including estate fencing, brick walls topped with dwarf railings, full-height brick walls and hedges. The use of the front garden for parking is less evident in these properties due to the generous size of the gardens, and in some cases they remain heavily planted and screened. Although the houses are evidently mid C20th in scale and appearance the size of plot, the amount of greenery and low density of development softens their presence sufficiently to make them a relatively neutral presence in the conservation area.

Parneleys, to the west of the Broughton Road, Willen and Walton Road junctions, is one of the earliest developments within the New Town (developed 1972- 9). It is comprised of an irregular grouping of single storey 'L'-shaped blocks in whitewashed brick with grey pantile roofs⁴. The houses are arranged around courtyards, with views in the courtyards and landscaping beyond, through openings into the solid walls. Lying just beyond the northern reach of the conservation area is the Little Hame / Manor Close development of similar date and design. Their merit in terms of contribution to the village's architectural or historic character is more muted through being more tucked away off the Willen Road with slightly more austere shared spaces and some alterations which have affected their original appearance quite significantly.



General view of Milton Keynes Village

⁴ Pevsner N and Williamson E: Ibid



Birds Cottage, 22 Broughton Rd

For the most part developments in the conservation area through the 1980's onward have been of little architectural merit or distinction, serving to dilute the genuine historic and architectural character and diminish the prevailing rural appearance of the village, often avoidably and needlessly.

Whilst not every building is of sufficient merit to warrant statutory listing there are still those of local interest that remain 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.

Statement of special interest

Draft statement of special interest

The settlement pattern is that of dispersed clusters of buildings ranging from characterful early timber cruck construction and Victorian labourers' cottages to more indifferent late C20th developments. The overall density is very low with numerous mature trees, allotments and open spaces ranging from the modest to the very large that combine to create a spacious green context for all the settlement's constituent parts. Despite the proximity of the New Town the village remains a quiet, characterful place within the grid road system.

The parish church, churchyard, the Old Rectory and its extensive grounds contribute positively to the rural character of the area. The enclosure of the Old Rectory within well-detailed coursed stone and brick walls also contributes to the rustic character of the area as do the extensive planted grounds around the building that are visible from public vantage points.

The village has some wide verges along parts of Broughton Road and the quieter Willen Road creating a roadside of soft edges. This characteristic lends emphasis to the gardens and meadows beyond, especially where they are only separated from public space by low hedge or picket fences. Private land and public realm are divided by a variety of boundary treatments, and are often planted with mature trees, hedges or open onto generous gardens. Many of the boundaries, especially those to the north side of Broughton Road, reinforce a rural character with hedges and trees and fields to the rear.

Broughton Road preserves a particularly rural character which contains a range of buildings of different dates that are indicative of the history of the area. There are a number of 17th and 18th century houses that are illustrative of the changing pattern or architecture and use of building materials over this time, in particular the move from timber framing to accomplished brickwork.

Former agricultural buildings remain within the village providing important evidence of the importance of farming to the local community and the financial returns generated for maintenance and investment.

The village's farmhouses are of notably good quality especially Southside Farm where arrangements of spacious yards, brick barns and a weatherboarded granary have also been preserved.

Also on Broughton Road, the agricultural labourers' houses, dating from the later C19th are double fronted, brick-built and stand within extensive planted plots showing the space and generosity of planning.

Spacious plots also enhance later development, such as the houses built by the Merchant Venturers. Other developments within the conservation area include early New Town developments with mixed outcomes for the hitherto predominantly rural character of the area.

The village has extensive tree coverage to the rear of many properties ensuring that in longer views over and between buildings, a rural backdrop is visible screening out views of encircling New Town development. Within the conservation area the open landscape around the village hall, the distance between buildings and the generosity of space evident in the planning adds significantly to the quiet, open, rural character of the conservation area.

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 City 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.

The public house, at the core of the village and conservation area provides interest and activity, as well as ensuring a suitable, viable use for one of the listed buildings. 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 and the sense of low enclosure within the conservation area. Proposals that interrupt existing open views of properties across gardens and any planting to their rear will be resisted.

Development proposals should ensure that new property boundaries are designed to ensure the original complexes are visible and the hierarchy of buildings retained.

Whilst there are a variety of boundaries within the conservation area close-boarded fencing is generally absent. The council will encourage boundary treatments that match those of adjacent buildings where they reinforce local character. The use of close boarded fencing and metal railings will be discouraged.

Many of the properties retain large building plots and generous front gardens, the division of plots will normally be resisted in order to retain this aspect of local character.

Suitable uses for retained agricultural buildings within the conservation area will be encouraged.

The loss of front gardens to parking will be resisted, and that access to parking spaces should be designed to ensure the property boundary to the street is retained to the greatest extent possible.

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 landscaping and planting behind the houses so side extensions and increases in roof volume should be resisted.

Replacement buildings within the conservation area should reflect the rhythm and building line of neighbours. Where there are established areas of consistent built character, proposed development within the plots should seek to emulate adjacent examples - recessed back from the road within an open garden using materials that reflect those used within the conservation area. The scale (height and massing) shall not be excessive and be guided by the dimensions and plan form of historic buildings that form the context of the proposals.

The council will look to ensure that opportunities to deal with sites or buildings that detract from the character of the conservation area are taken.

There is little evidence of loft conversions within the conservation area. An Article 4 Direction should be considered to ensure the front planes of roofs remain clear of dormers or roof lights for groups of buildings.

⁶ Woodfield, *ibid*

Replacement of windows and doors with UPVC in unlisted buildings, especially those attributed to the Merchant Venturers, has already happened, but broadly the pattern of fenestration reflects the form which is retained in other buildings. The council will consider an Article 4 Direction to control this change in unlisted 19th century buildings, such as the runs of

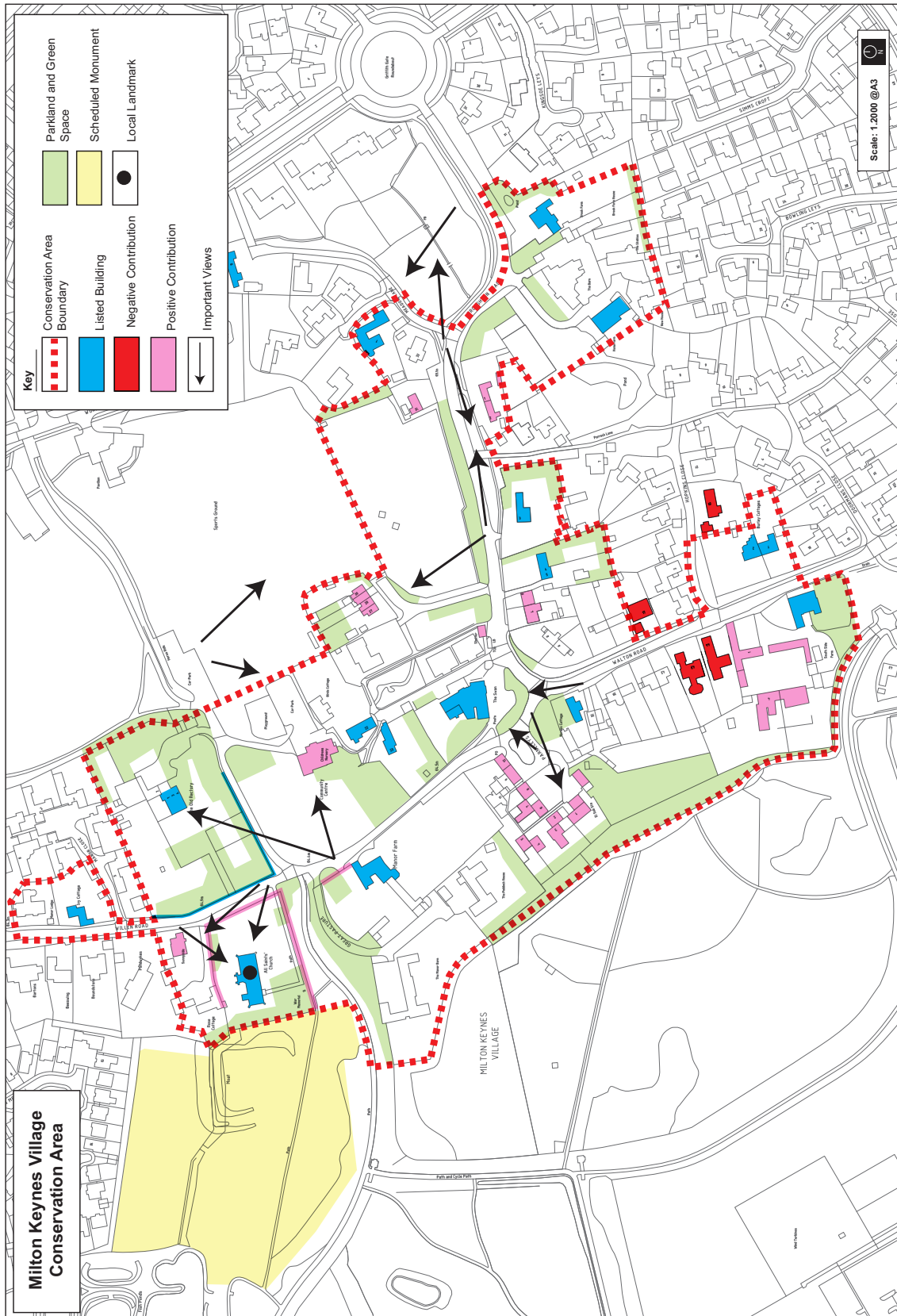
cottages on Broughton Road where the uniformity of the buildings is a significant element in their character.

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



Brick terraced cottages with Welsh slate roofs and timber casement windows overlooking Broughton Rd

Map 1: Milton Keynes Village Conservation Area Boundary - Principal Features



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All Saints Church

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

Milton Keynes City Council
Conservation and Archaeology
Civic, 1 Saxon Gate East
Central Milton Keynes MK9 3EJ

T: 01908 252358

E: conservationarchaeology@milton-keynes.gov.uk

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