

# Shenley Church End Conservation Area Review

**June 2019**

Conservation & Archaeology

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



House on Shenley Road, Shenley Church End



# Historical Background

The first mention of Shenley is in the C11th Domesday survey where it is named Senelai<sup>1</sup>, derived from Old English – ‘bright clearing’ – possibly indicating the origins of the settlement as a clearing in woodland.

The parish is split between the two townships, or endships, of Shenley Church End and, approximately three quarters of a mile to the south, Shenley Brook End<sup>2</sup>. The 1880 Ordnance Survey 25in map shows how both settlements could be reached via the road that ran from New Bradwell via Bradwell Village and Loughton to a point two miles to the south on the Buckingham Road in Bletchley, at a junction now overlooked by the Three Trees Public House.

Lying within the conservation area and with its earliest parts dating from the C11th, is the grade I listed Church of St Mary. Standing on slightly raised ground the church is an imposing, stone structure with a stout tower located centrally in its plan. The late C12th chancel marked the completion of a cruciform Norman church<sup>3</sup>. Adjacent to the church to its southwest is a very grand, generously proportioned rectory in the early C19th Regency style with extensive rear ranges.

Unfortunately the associated walled garden to the west of the house have now been split away and redeveloped giving rise to the ordinary late C20th house that now stands within.



Holly Cottage, Shenley Road, Shenley Church End

<sup>1</sup> Woodfield, Guide to the Historic Buildings of Milton Keynes (1986) MKDC

<sup>2</sup> Croft R & Mynard D, The Changing Landscape of Milton Keynes (1993) Buckinghamshire Archaeological society

<sup>3</sup> Pevsner N: The Buildings of England, Buckinghamshire (1994) Penguin Books



St Mary's Church, Shenley Church End

At a 'T' Junction with Oakhill Road stands the timber framed 'Dower House' a C17th 'L' plan house, formerly two cottages, distinguished by a stone built ground floor topped by a timber frame upper part that has colour-washed brick infills and a clay tile roof.

The 1880 Ordnance Survey shows how the road led westward from here to Lawn Farm and Oakhill Wood. Lanes out of villages tended to be just as important to village based farm labour as a means of access to the surrounding fields that sustained the village economy as they were to moving commodities over longer distances.

A short distance out of the village is the grade II listed Shenley Park House possibly built by the Knapp Family<sup>4</sup>, the present well-proportioned house dates from the early C19th but the land around it has now been developed for housing. The historic detachment

of the house's position from the village and the subsequent intrusion on its surroundings limit its contribution to the village's character and it hence it continues to lie beyond the conservation area boundary. Any similarities in architectural style with the rectory may not be coincidental as members of the Knapp family were important land holders and rectors in the village at the time both were constructed.

To the south of the Oakhill Road junction on the east side of Shenley Road are the grade II listed terrace of six almshouses of 1615 endowed by Thomas Stafford, a local landowner, in his will. A worn stone plaque on the front of the almshouses and a monument in the church yard still survive in memory to Thomas Stafford. South of here the modern Thirlby Lane departs eastward before swinging northward to rejoin the historic line of Shenley Road just before it

<sup>4</sup> Woodfield, *Ibid*

is curtailed by the modern semi-circular sweep of Burchard Crescent constructed in the early 1990's.

Set in a shallow hollow at this point and surrounded by trees is 'The Homestead' (3 Shenley Road) an eye catching black and white painted timber frame and thatched smallholder's cottage of C17th origin. The house and plot are partly shielded from general view by trees and shrubbery but appears to have remained an unaffected corner of rural character despite the

magnitude of change around it. A line of mid or late C19th cottages lead on from this point southwards on the eastside of Shenley Road, these cottages and a school were in place in the village by the time of the publication of the 1880 ordnance survey 25in map. The presence of the church school and rectory are indicative of Shenley Church End's position at the top of a hierarchy of historic settlement in an area of loosely gathered small villages and ends.



The Homestead, 3 Shenley Road

# Dominant building styles, materials and details

Shenley Church End's surviving older buildings and structures are plain and robustly built vernacular houses, cottages, boundary walls and former farm buildings. In line with the geology of the clay upland they are mostly built from local brick with only the church and almshouses being built of stone. Earlier domestic dwellings and farm buildings were constructed from timber frame with wattle and daub infill panels. Traditional local roofing materials included clay tiles and long stemmed straw for thatch, both materials imparting a distinctive rustic character to the locality.

The use of brick as a principal building material is reinforced by the presence of the quirkily proportioned C18th Manor Farmhouse (grade II listed) with its taller south end gable and distinctive run of buildings (some modern extensions) following the line and fall of Shenley Road northward.

Although the present farm house and out buildings date from the md C18th the site may be much older by virtue of it possibly being the main manor farm of the Maunsell Family who held land in the area in the C12th and C13th<sup>5</sup>.

A closer look at the brickwork of Manor Farmhouse shows how headers (the square end of bricks) burnt black in the kiln are placed amongst stretchers creating a 'Flemish bond' arrangement and come close to making a chequer board or diaper pattern across the frontage of the building. Later repairs or building movement may explain why this pattern has broken down. Within the grounds of Manor Farm stands a grade II listed weather board and timber frame barn with brick panel infills which, despite lying abandoned for a number of years, survives to indicate the historic appearance of a traditional vernacular timber frame barn or granary.



Manor Farmhouse, Shenley Road

<sup>5</sup> Croft & Mynard: Ibid



5 and 7 Shenley Road

The British Geological Survey's online 'Geology of Britain Viewer' confirms that mudstone underlies the village with the nearest deposits of limestone at Calverton. Hence the geology dictates that the village is free of the stone boundary walls found in the north of the borough with hedgerows typically forming garden and other open space boundaries.

Timber, glass and lead were the main materials for doors and windows, each tending to be made bespoke rather than to standard sizes. At Manor Farmhouse the casement windows typically only have a minimal inset from the front of building, the windows themselves are timber flush fitting multi-pane casement frames set under shallow (segmental) arches on the older part and flat topped segmental arches on the newer part. On the older part the windows are 'dressed' with slightly paler orange bricks to lend them additional emphasis on the roadside frontage. The eaves line and gutter sit only one or two courses of brick above the first floor windows.

The front door is located under a simple flat lead-topped timber porch hood held in place by simple

curved brackets.

Numbers 5 to 15 Shenley Road (but with the exception of the heavily altered number 9) demonstrate the subtle variations in the treatment of mid to late Victorian housing. Most have Welsh slate roofing, timber sash windows which are set back into the face of the house, stone lintels or segmental arch brick window tops and Flemish Bond orange-brown brickwork with cream mortar joints. Whilst there are some later alterations the houses survive to form an attractive and visually varied row set back behind hedges or timber fences. Numbers 11 and 13 would have been identical at one time but some ad hoc changes have diluted the intended roadside symmetry that the houses once had.

Iron is 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 Shenley Church End now. An exception is the distinctive hoop top railings to the school yard which are set on a low brick wall and the north entrance gates to the church yard.

The school (now a day nursery) is perhaps the most unusual building of the Victorian period in the village which Woodfield<sup>6</sup> refers to as ‘a vernacular style with sensitively detailed brickwork and entrances with round arches’. Its appearance is influenced by what would now be called the ‘Arts and Crafts’ style having tall hipped tile roofs and classroom windows breaking the eaves line. By choosing this fashionable, distinctive architectural language and using good quality materials the school building conveys a message of innovation, knowledge and confidence. Sufficient original windows and other details survive to convey the building’s original appearance.

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 in the revised conservation area they usually impart a strong sense of character and individuality to the buildings and areas of which they form a part.



Former School Building, Shenley Church End

<sup>6</sup> Woodfield, *ibid*



# Statement of special interest

Shenley Church End village is attractively dispersed in irregular collections of dwellings built principally in a warm, orange-brown brick but of different ages, appearance and uses along the north-south aligned Shenley Road. Behind are dense stands of trees that provide an important green backdrop simultaneously maintaining a sense of the village's historic rural setting whilst shielding views of the surrounding late C20th housing that might otherwise dispel this impression.

Walking south along Shenley Road from the timber framed and thatched 'Homestead' towards the settlement core, the road is increasingly edged by houses and garden greenery bounded by hedges, fences and walls. This creates a pleasing sense of enclosed linearity with limited views out from the midst of attractive C18th and C19th cottages and the former farm barns now occupied by the parish council offices.

On the west side of Shenley Road the revised conservation area commences at the characterful Arts and Crafts styled school. A short walk further south where the road opens out by a small green, is the attractively placed 28 Shenley Road, a neatly symmetrical white rendered cottage with plain tile roof set behind a low timber picket fence. The house is flanked by bushes and garden trees to the north and the trees of the church yard and rectory to the south. The house overlooks an unassuming stone war memorial on the green whilst, southwards, a path leads away to the black painted iron gate and railings that form a quaint threshold to the churchyard. The orange- brown brick wall of the rectory curves round eastward from the gates, leading the eye back to the road and the newly and neatly restored and extended brick and slate 'barns' (only the northernmost structure is actually original and was used as cow shed) of Manor Farm now occupied by the parish offices. These barns are raised on top of a generous

swathe of grass verge close at hand whilst in the distance the black and white squares of the Dower House's timber frame can be picked out creating an attractive visual termination to the view. On the left in this important view can be seen the brown brick gable end of Manor Farm punctuated by a first floor casement window and a weather vane topping the apex of the barn roof. This collection of buildings, their details, the trees and the open spaces freely arranged around a curve on the Shenley Road imparts a very strong impression of a small rural village centre.

St Mary's church is heavily screened by trees from public vantage points in the village but once in the churchyard there are numerous picturesque views of this important and unusual stone built parish church. The churchyard is a place of solemn quietude within the village but pleasant views over open playing fields to the west and into the housing development in Dudley Hill to the north prevent any sense of oppressive enclosure.

The church and the imposing rectory have a functional inter-relationship and each benefits from the presence of the other in terms of enhancing their significance.

Although the rectory is now in private hands and the gardens encroached on, a strong sense of historic ecclesiastical authority in the parish remains.

To the south of the Oakhill Road junction, once slightly separated from the settlement by open ground, are a set of almshouses. The grouping of Manor Farm, the Rectory and walls, the Dower House and recently restored 'Bucks County' sign post form an attractive grouping along with the almshouses which, despite some evidence of recent neglect, are an important, distinctive presence at the southern edge 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 as part of 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.

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.

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.

Development within existing plots should be subordinate in scale (height and massing) to the street frontage properties so that existing hierarchies are preserved.

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 presently no existing Article 4(2) direction covering the conservation area to prevent the loss of original details on unlisted buildings in domestic use through permitted development rights. Number 5, 7, 11, 13 and 15 Shenley Road specifically retain features (doors, windows, slate roofs etc) which contribute positively to local character. At the end of the review programme the Local Planning Authority will identify individual buildings and places which retain such details and where appropriate consider limiting permitted development rights through the use of Article 4(2) directions. Alterations to windows, doors, roof coverings, painting of

unpainted brickwork, means of enclosure and the removal of chimneys could then be changes requiring planning permission.

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.

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.

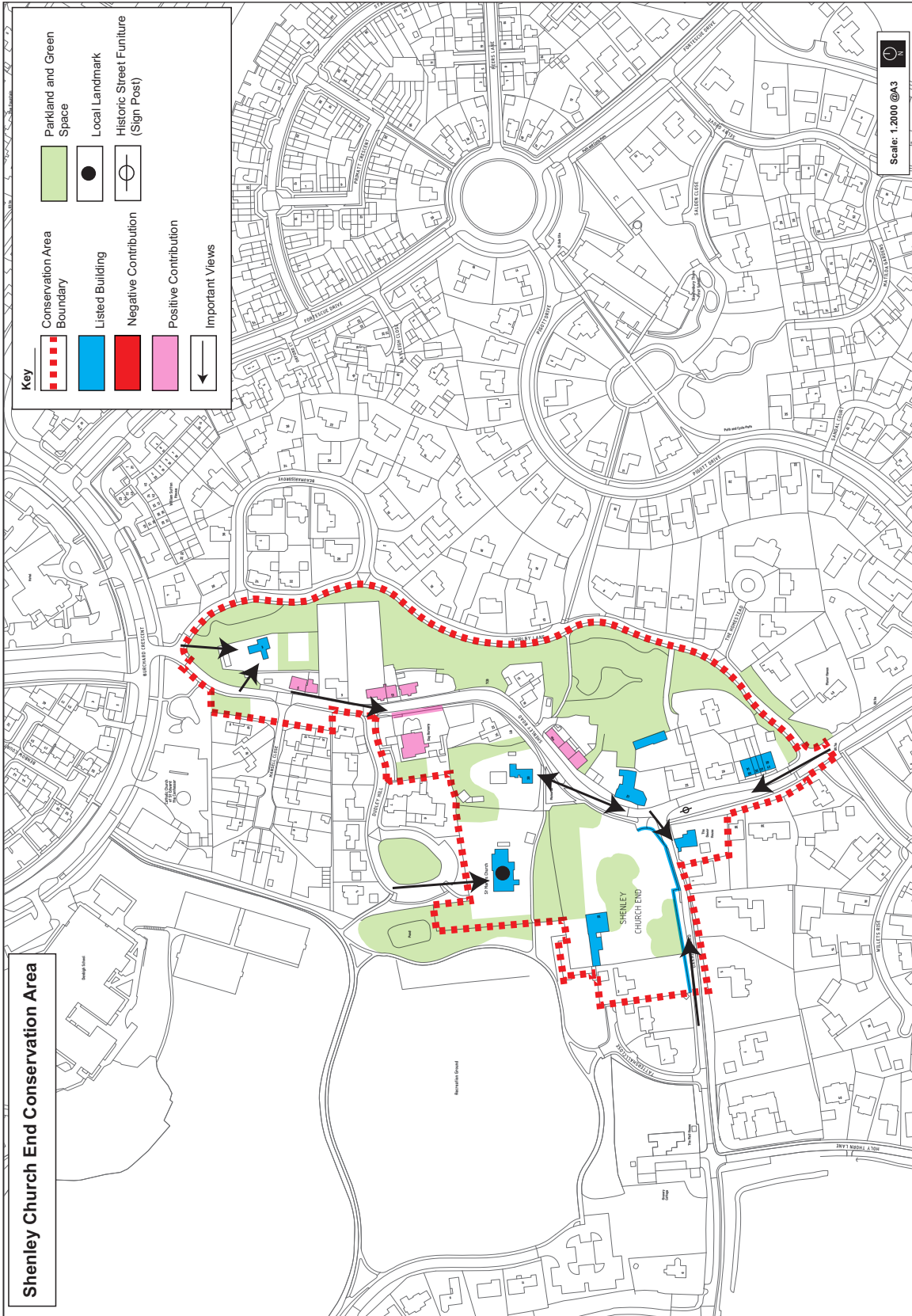
Proposals for development should seek to avoid disruption or loss of historic boundaries unless there are clear and convincing reasons for so doing.

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 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: Shenley Church End Conservation Area - Principal Features



# Bibliography

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Timber frame Dower House, Shenley Road, Shenley Church End



Refurbished barns adjacent Manor Farm House, Shenley Road, Shenley Church End



[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/conservation-and-archaeology](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/conservation-and-archaeology)

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M19010 - January 2023