

Hanslope Conservation Area Review

December 2021
Conservation & Archaeology

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



St James church spire and the
Old Rectory seen from The Green

Historical Development

Recent (2018/2019) archaeological excavations in advance of housing development have revealed areas of middle-Iron Age to Romano-British rural settlement adjacent to Hanslope.

In late Saxon times, Castlethorpe was the principal settlement of the manor of Hanslope. This is evident not simply from the castle site but from ecclesiastical history. The first place of worship at Hanslope Church End, was a chapelry of Castlethorpe but by a licence granted in the 13th century, Hanslope became the parish church in the place of the old mother church at Castlethorpe and has retained that dominance into the 20th century.

In this extensive parish the Saxon and Medieval system of strip farming would have developed as clearings in an extensive forest with clusters of dwellings being the homes of the feudal villeins or farmers. This explains the numerous 'Ends' in the parish of Hanslope; apart from Church End which became the dominant settlement of Hanslope, there are Bullington End (0.25 miles west); Hungate End (1

mile west); Long Street End (1 mile north); Pindon End (1 mile north west); Stocking Green (0.25 miles north) and Tathall End (1 mile north east). In the early 17th century the tenants of the manor had common rights of pasture in part of the forest clearing at Hanslope Green and it is recorded that in 1616 there were 24 households at 'Grene End'. The last surviving house at Green End was demolished in the 1950's.

The historic layout of Hanslope with its two parallel roads, the main thoroughfare of High Street and with Gold Street as a possible service road suggests a planned layout extending north from Church End. The increasing importance of Hanslope Church End in the 13th century was confirmed by the grant in 1293 of a market and fair to William Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. A market was then held weekly on Thursdays and the fair held annually for 15 days commencing on the eve of the Feast of St James (25th July). They continued into the 18th century but had been discontinued at its close. A map of 1790



St James church, built of local stone, the spire is an important local landmark

shows Stock House, presumed to be a market hall, situated in the middle of High Street in the vicinity of Nos 26 and 51. This may indicate that the former Market Square was previously considerably larger than it is now and that the Pierrepont Almshouses (1712) were built on the Market Square as its usage was declining. At the end of the 18th century a cattle fair on Holy Thursday had become customary and was still in existence in 1888.

The Hanslope enclosure awards were made consequent upon Acts of Parliament in 1778 and 1803. Subsequently lace making became an important cottage industry in Hanslope and employed some 500 women and children in 1862. There are few remains of this industry in the form of workshops or modifications to houses to cater for lacemaking. Lacemaker Cottages still stand in Long Street but otherwise the industry is now lost and, as almost everywhere else, exists only as a hobby. To cater for an expanding, nonconformist local workforce a handsome Baptist chapel (Gospel Hall) of 1809 and a Methodist chapel of 1828 (that replaced an earlier 18th century chapel) were built; both are now grade II listed.

Although modest stone and thatch cottages of the 17th and 18th century and later brick Georgian and Victorian houses stand throughout the village, the fields that the population served now lie some distance away reached only by negotiating the latterday housing estates that all but encircle the village. Indeed, the village has expanded to such a degree that the only significant length of historic boundary between the village and the open



Methodist Chapel, built 1828 in flemish bond, has a pediment with dentilled eaves, delicate brick arches over semicircular arch windows that are enhanced by slim margin panes

countryside is formed by the southwestern wall to the church yard and the southwestern garden boundary of Manor (or Rectory) Farm. The path that runs along the north western side of the church yard is probably a historic labourers' path from village to fields. All farming operations from the village have now ceased but two public houses, a butcher's shop, a general store and post office still trade.

Dominant building styles, materials and details

Frequently, long standing local materials and methods have become unorthodox and rarely used but an appreciation and understanding of them is required if the authentic historic character of the conservation area and its individual buildings is to be appreciated and maintained.

The principal construction materials used for a settlement's older buildings are often indicative of the underlying local geology and can vary a great deal from one place to another. Underlining this importance of locality to appearance, the British Geological survey's online 'Geology of Britain Viewer' (<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/mapviewers/geologyofbritainviewer/>) confirms that Hanslope sits on a bedrock geology of Blisworth limestone. This is a common occurrence for settlements north of the River Ouse where there is a significant tradition of stone buildings and walls within the villages of North Buckinghamshire where it borders Northamptonshire.

Many of Hanslope's buildings are built of stone but the other principal material, commonly used in the village's Victorian and 20th century buildings, is brick. Roofs tend to be of plain clay tile or Welsh slate, both now frequently replaced by late 20th century concrete tile. There are also a number of characterful thatched roofs dotted about the village. Other important materials include timber, metal and glass. In Hanslope the timber framing tradition found elsewhere in the borough, particularly south of the River Ouse, is absent.

Blisworth limestone is durable and shelly and is a pale honeyyellow in colour with a slight mottling. Unlike the purer less shelly and easier worked 'freestones' of Northamptonshire Blisworth stone lends itself less readily to ornate carving and so buildings of all status and function tend to have an undemonstrative, unassuming appearance. On close examination the stonemasonry in the walls of all the buildings surviving from the 16th and 17th century tends to be rubble stone laid to courses of randomly varying width and frequently breaking down into random coursing. In Hanslope the surviving stone boundary walls tend to be randomly coursed and have unpointed open joints between the stones.

It is unclear if there is a specific local 'quarry' in the

immediate vicinity, but a number of 'gravel pits' are marked on 1st Edition (1880) Ordnance Survey maps.

It may be that much of the village's building stone originated from these, perhaps supplemented by intermittent workings at farm based delves around the settlement. By the time of the Ordnance Survey first edition's publication most of these pits are prefixed with 'Old' suggesting production has ceased.

A good vantage point from which to appreciate the use of stone in the village is beside the gate that leads from The Green to the churchyard. St James is of course the foremost building in the village for demonstrating traditional stonework practices over time but in terms of domestic architecture, the Vicarage (Grade II listed) built in the early 19th century and the thatched cottage at 4 The Green, from the late 17th century (Grade II listed), make an interesting comparison. The first has a formally arranged symmetrical frontage of carefully cut ashlar stonework (consistent dimensions laid in courses with narrow mortar joints) and then rougher but still coursed stone to the side. At number 4 however the masonry is less considered and whilst there is some attempt at coursing it tends to break down here and there.



The Old Vicarage and Number 4 The Green. Two contrasting styles of stonework; the formal arrangement using carefully cut ashlar whilst the thatch cottage is of randomly coursed rubblestone

Stone buildings are spread sporadically throughout the village, interleaved with later brick built dwellings, but with most clustered around Church End. However, the former Post Office at 14 High



Number 5 High Street, possibly late 19th century in origin, the choice for walling material remains randomly coursed stone, but Welsh slate has been used for the roof. The chimney is of brick. The windows are timber three over three panes with margin panes, all set back into the opening by approximately 90mm, topped by flathead, segmentally arched, gauged brick arches. The house has a low key but still very elegant central 6 panel door, polished brass work and timber porch hood and surround, all set behind an attractive garden

Street (Grade II listed) and the house at 5 High Street are worthy of note.

Number 14 is a 19th century refronting of an older house and its symmetry draws comparison with The Vicarage. Whilst less accomplished than the latter in terms of stonework the windows are given heightened expression through the use of an orange-brown iron stone to dress to the windows. One might conclude that the darker stone came from Northamptonshire where ironstone is more plentiful but the presence of similar material in a 17th century window in the north east gabled of Green Manor, Church End (Grade II listed) and the window drip moulds at Maltings Farm, Newport Road (Grade II listed) lead to a suspicion that this darker stone was also available locally, if in more limited amounts. At Number 5 High Street is another considered symmetrical stonebuilt house of late 19th century origin. Taken together the houses perhaps illustrate how stone and brick were once of similar price and hence following the current conventions for design and detail was more important than the choice of material used in the building.



Number 14 High Street draws interesting comparison with the Old Vicarage and 5 High Street, it is symmetrical, of stone with a plain clay tile roof. Here the windows are under (now white painted) stone lintels. These lintels may be the same stone as that used as an ornamental dressing to add expression to the window openings

Stone walls are present throughout the village playing the dual role of dividing land but linking places. Good examples may be found adjacent the Watts Arms, outside the front, and beside the rear garden, of 51 High Street and the wall on the north west side of the church yard. The latter distinguishes itself by placing stone in a chevron pattern and through being 'open jointed', has a traditional finish where there is no pointing.



Stone laid in a chevron pattern at St James church yard

The coping details at the Watts Arms demonstrate a 'cock and hen' (or 'stag and doe') finish where one tall and one shorter coping stone alternate, whilst outside number 51 High Street half round and upturned chamfer bricks are used to create a distinctive and characterful coping course. Unusual but highly distinctive wall copings can also be seen by returning to the churchyard gate from The Green where blue engineering brick specials have been pressed into use for decorative coping at 4 The Green.



Distinctive wall coping at 4 The Green

In Hanslope early bricks that stand in or adjacent to the public realm are fairly rudimentary, evidenced by the unevenness of the surfaces and numerous indentations caused by hand stacking and drying on dry straw before kiln firing. Some bricks are blackened with glass crystals embedded where the clay and sand has burnt and transformed due to direct exposure to heat at the core of a kiln. Most however are a pale orange to rich, warm, orange-brown in colour. No clay pits or kilns are marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey suggesting that any local brick making had ceased by the close of the 19th century. Until this time, brick buildings in the village reflect those unique traits imparted by local clays and artisan methods of local production.

The wall at 1 High Street shows how utilitarian brickwork could be, bricks are laid alternating header and stretcher in the manner of Flemish bond but on the long / narrow edge of the stretcher with the header, also on edge, going through the depth of the wall. This is sometimes referred to as a rat trap bond, the core of the wall being hollow. The bricks have begun to flake, but numbers '2.3.2' inscribed into the

brick on its bedding plane prior to firing and never intended to be seen, are now visible. These numbers are probably a batch number or maker's mark.



Low brick wall in rat trap bond where the bricks are laid on edge. The meaning of the 232 marking made on the bricks before being kiln fired is not understood at present. The wall has been pointed with a hard cement which is causing the softer brick to flake but the clarity of the numbers is not yet affected



More rat trap bond in the boundary wall of Chapel House with neat terracotta coping detail. The house has a strict ornamental decorative chequer board pattern formed by alternating colours of headers and stretchers in Flemish bond. At the side are courses of stretcher brick punctuated in alternating dark and cream headers in a form of English garden wall bond. Note the six over six sash windows set into their openings and the flat head segmental arches in gauged brickwork

Much more meticulous brickwork can be seen at Chapel House, Gold Street, where true Flemish bond alternates orange stretchers with cream coloured headers to create a very measured and poised symmetrical composition, the only openings being for the windows, the door having been removed to the left hand side. Also worth noting is the perfectly executed rubbed brickwork for the flat head arches.

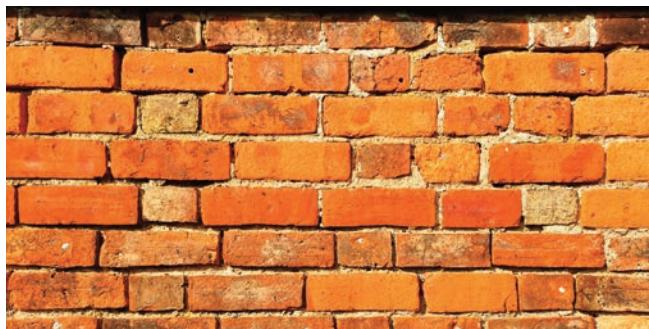
Immediately next door at Yew Tree Terrace can be seen yet another variation of Flemish Bond where three stretchers are used and then a single header to create Flemish garden wall bond. This is cheaper work for a lower status building where the brick is required to go further.

3 High Street and the outshot to the Vicarage on The Green (front cover) are notable too for here stone buildings have been refronted in brick.



A stone building refronted in brick but the possibility that stone was a cheaper and less fashionable material for the sides of the house at the time of construction is not discounted

The mortar for brick and stonework is white with small pebbles and/or black hearth grit evident. The whiteness comes from the slaked quicklime into which coarse and smooth sand and material considered to aid curing of the mortar was added. Lime mortar in particular can be temperamental to use and inconsistent in inexperienced hands so, as a result, its use in general building has ceased. The porosity of the material and its suitability for use in softer handmade brick and porous limestones means that air curing lime mortar is more widely available for use again.



Lime mortar in a brick wall at the Watts Arms of (mostly) Flemish garden wall bond (courses of three stretchers and one header in sequence). The lime mortar is a creamy off white with sand aggregate and some hearth grit to help the mortar to cure

Early roofing materials would have been long straw thatch or locally made plain clay tiles. Long stemmed straw for thatch was once easily available from the surrounding fields but the change to shorter stemmed wheat varieties and mechanised harvesting has led to its replacement in the latter part of the 20th century with reed thatch. This material has a much sharper clipped appearance compared to the shaggier and softer looking long straw variety traditional to the area. Long straw also lacks ridge detailing as it is flexible enough to wrap over the top of roofs.

Plain clay tiles often with a plain shallow curve that imparts a pleasing slightly jumbled look are now rare in the village. Here and there are ridged or curved pantiles which add characterful texture; they are mostly used on outbuildings. Later mass produced tiles from the late 19th century onwards tend to lie much flatter, are more uniform in colour than the



Curved pantiles on a mono-pitch roof next to Horseshoe Cottages with an early metal casement window above

handmade kind and now dominate the village.

With the advent of rail and then road transport came a switch to using slate for shallower pitched roofs. Slate would have been used exclusively at first for the Victorian dwellings but is also likely to have displaced plain clay peg tile or thatch on other older buildings.

The distinctive dark grey of Welsh slate is now itself being displaced by modern concrete tile or other cheaper forms of slate from Spain or China

Timber, glass, lead and occasionally metal would have once been commonplace materials for details such as doors and windows, each tending to be made bespoke rather than to standard 'off the peg' sizes.

Early windows tend to be side hung flush fitting casement variety but few genuine examples now survive. At first they combined small pieces of glass held in place by lead 'comes' but evolved to have larger panes of glass fixed by putty into frames subdivided by wooden glazing bars. Cills tended to be absent and the windows placed almost flush with the external stonework. During the 18th century vertically hung sliding sash windows became prevalent. At first these too were flush with external masonry but late 18th century laws aimed at reducing the risk of fire spreading from house to house pushed the windows into their openings by four inches. The shadow lines this creates adds expression to later Georgian and Victorian windows.

Whilst modern windows are influenced by the configuration of casement and sash windows few truly replicate the characteristics of the early joinery.

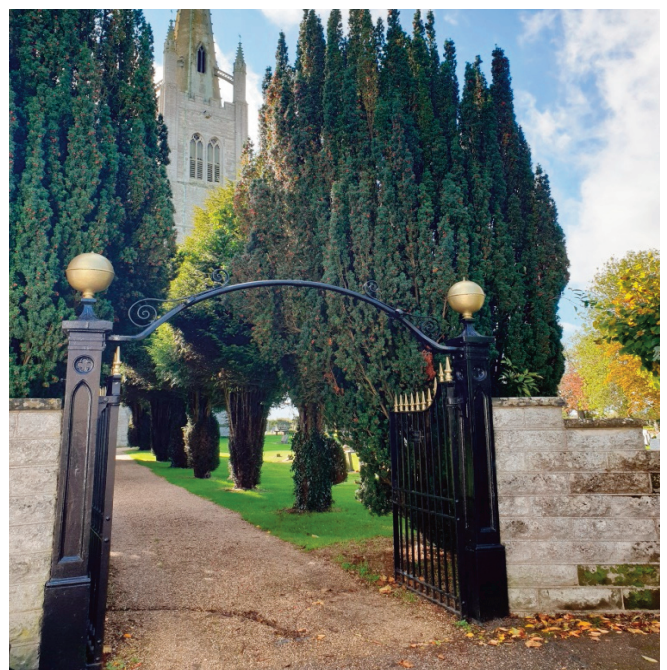


Timber side hung casement window with lead comes under a timber lintel at Horseshoe Cottages. The timber window has pegged mortice and tenon joints and 'HL' hinges and a metal hook window stay

The imperfections of the cylinder glass used in Victorian replicate the characteristics of the early joinery. The imperfections of the cylinder glass used in Victorian windows also creates a sparkle that is absent in modern windows. Where modern windows predominate the variations in appearance are normally quite evident, and often profoundly weaken the appearance of historic buildings and their contribution to local character.

Doors come in a variety of designs from basic plank doors to ornate Victorian and Edwardian designs. In Hanslope some Victorian or Edwardian era doors survive. They typically comprise vertical stiles and horizontal rail frames further divided vertically by muntins into which wood panels or glazing is placed. Fanlights, where present, are invariably placed above doors and never incorporated into them. Polished brass knobs, rather than lever handles, were used to open doors. The doors are always painted smooth and woodgrain finish is absent. Georgian and Victorian doors, particularly on higher status buildings often have a door hood supported by brackets. These can be very plain to highly decorated and sometimes accompanied by an ornamental door surround.

Iron too would have been in evidence for incidental features and details around the village but not for major structural elements. The presence of iron boot scrapes, bollards and railings is very rare in Hanslope



Iron gates at the entrance to the church yard

now. No iron gutters or down pipes were specifically noted but may still survive here and there.

Historic cobbles and kerbs are also now largely absent from the village replaced by modern granite sets.

Improvements in transport, DIY, fashions, and short term cheap fixes have cumulatively caused a great deal of harm to characterful buildings but the variety of designs and quality of materials means that significant numbers of original features still survive nonetheless.

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



Horseshoe Cottages

Statement of Special Interest

Hanslope has become a large village, previously existing as several associated ends it is now encircled by some rather indifferent housing estates and much altered older housing on all approaches. Its location in the landscape is pinpointed from several kilometres away by the steep, high and graceful stone spire of St James' church. Closer at hand in the village too, it is this feature that dominates and draws the visitor into the attractive cluster of stone houses at Hanslope Church End which extend in an arc around the east side of the church yard from the Market Square to The Green. Within the Market Square and The Green and the connecting footpath that skirts the churchyard there is a strong feeling of reassuring enclosure amongst the old buildings which are placed in random order so that frontages, gables and, sometimes, attractive gardens are variously on show as one moves through and around Church End. Partial views are available of the body of the church through old church yard yew trees from the connecting footpath but oversailing the area and sometimes visible unexpectedly over the roof tops is the tall and gracious spire of St James.

Approached via the footpath from the north and edged by stone dwellings The Green is an attractive space with forward views of Maltings Farmhouse, the Old Vicarage to the left and the more modest thatched cottage of 4 The Green to the right and slightly ahead. The remaining stone cottages reinforce a sense of permanence and enclosure. The pond forms an attractive focal point but the inviting footpath that leads on from here only opens out into an inauspicious if neatly kept late 20th century housing development. A view of the Manor Farm has been maintained but two dwellings intrude awkwardly thereby distracting the eye from what would have benefitted from being a much more open vista.

Returning to Market Place the impression again is one of enclosure with the characterful thatched and curving frontage of Horseshoe Cottages and the imposing Stafford House and Green Manor forming a trio of listed buildings contributing decisively to the unique character of the locale. A butcher's shop front on Gold Street creates a characterful visual stop at the north eastern entrance to Market Place whilst the

Watts Arms forms a similar function at the far end of High Street.

High Street, as the name suggests, was once the principal thoroughfare with commercial premises and dwellings on each side. On the north east side, the plots extended as far as Gold Street, historically a service road set out by medieval planners, but this relationship has blurred as Gold Street now forms the principal vehicle thoroughfare relegating High Street to relative quietude.

There are a number of important listed buildings on High Street dating from the late 17th century but altered over time masking their original appearance. Many unlisted buildings also contribute to village character hereabouts including a pair of cottages (one thatched) behind a low brick wall at 49 and 51 and an impressive row of Victorian brick terraced houses with attractive front gardens behind white picket fencing. Although most windows have been replaced there has been a rare consistency of approach in the replacements to maintain an impression of the multipane originals. The linearity of High Street focuses an important view from the Watts Arms back to the church spire at Church End temporarily distracting the eye from the more workaday roadside environment hereabouts.

Most historic buildings do not have dormer windows but where they do occur they are normally approximately half way up the roof plane. Dormer windows positioned lower down the roof plane normally suggests a replacement of thatch has occurred or that the building is relatively recent.

Outbuildings are usually positioned to the rear of principal buildings or sometimes to one side. They may have rooflights, but these are used sparingly. Rooflights are rarely used on historic house roofs although there may sometimes be a casement window in a side gable to light an attic space.

Although busy with traffic, Gold Street still plays a pivotal role in reinforcing the historic character of the village core. The presence of two stores and a butcher's shop also contribute to a sense of daytime activity largely absent in High Street. There are older stone cottages interleaved with Victorian and Edwardian houses, some of these prettily

ornamented with timber open work along their frontage. The Chapel (Grade II listed) and (unlisted) Chapel House are particularly noteworthy and the listed thatched cottages too are important components but it is the variety orientation, plot placing, materials, the linear vista and activity that cumulatively impart a strong sense of local distinctiveness to Gold Street as it passes through the village.

Hanslope is characterised by a relatively limited range of materials which are used in a variety of ways to create buildings of very different appearance. Brick

and stone construction varies from the rudimentary to complex and skilful; buildings are configured informally or formally depending on a combination of age status and use. Houses are often visually associated with an attractive garden plot. There is a variety of scale in the domestic buildings from one and half storey cottages to more imposing two and a half storey houses. Overall the eclectic mix of scale, appearance, detailing, materials and use of buildings arranged around Church End, High Street and Gold Street combine to create a visually appealing, varied and complex historic environment.



An important grouping of buildings on High Street which demonstrate a variety of age, appearance, use and scale in harmonious combination

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 should remain complementary or subordinate in scale (height and massing) to other existing street frontage properties or preserve a sense of hierarchy within an existing plot.

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.

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

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 Hanslope 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.

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 formed by stone or brick walls. The use of close timber board fencing or panel fencing will normally be resisted.

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

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

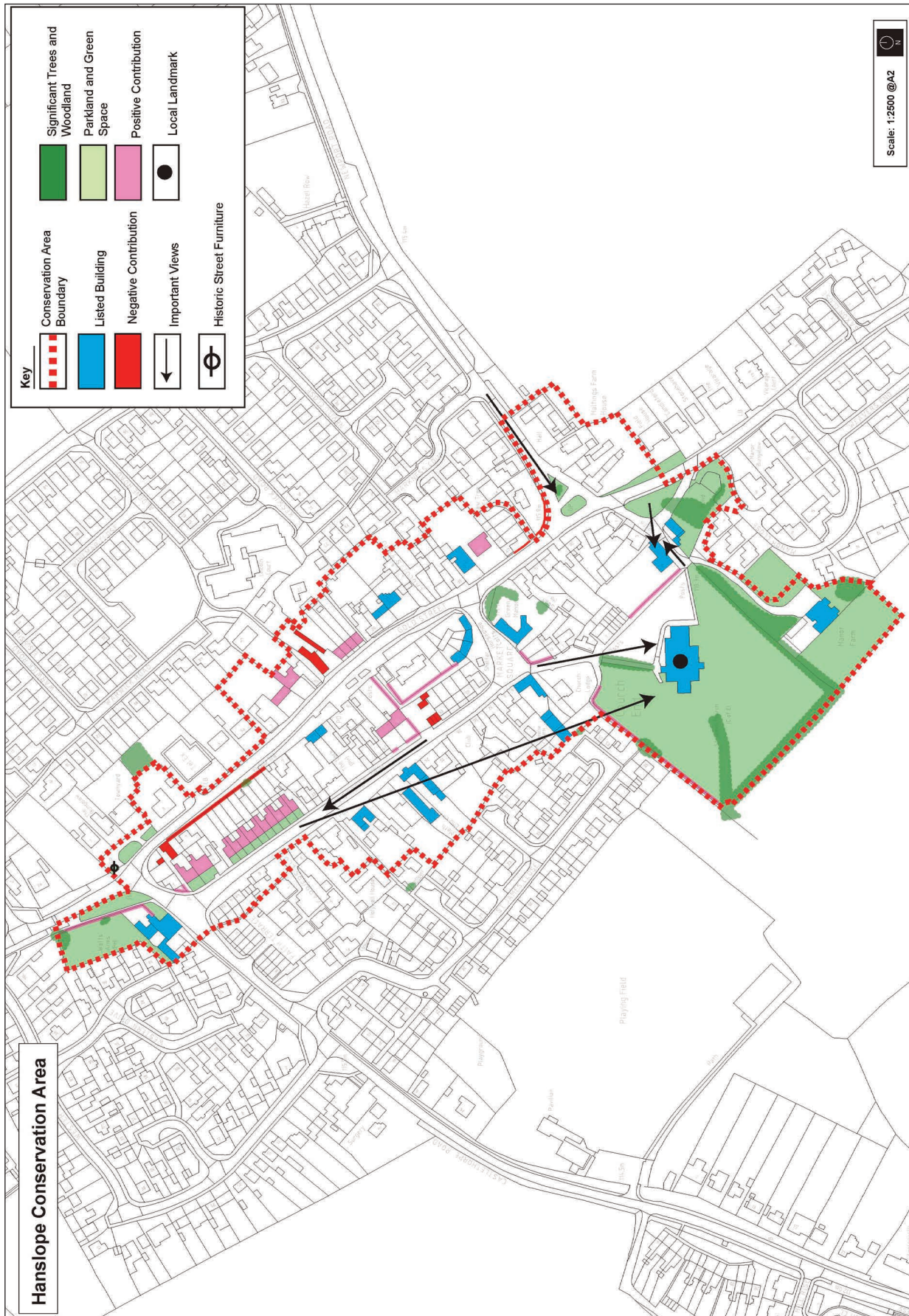
The Council shall continue to offer preapplication advice to occupiers of unlisted property in the conservation area in order to avoid unsympathetic, ad hoc choices for replacement or repair of properties and features such as windows or boundary walls.

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 coordinate works and reinstate disturbed road and pavement surfaces sympathetically. Road improvements should avoid 'urbanising' the rural character of the conservation area.



A boundary wall built in Flemish garden wall bond with a pattern formed by inserting a darker brick at every third header on alternating courses

Hanslope Conservation area - Principal Features



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