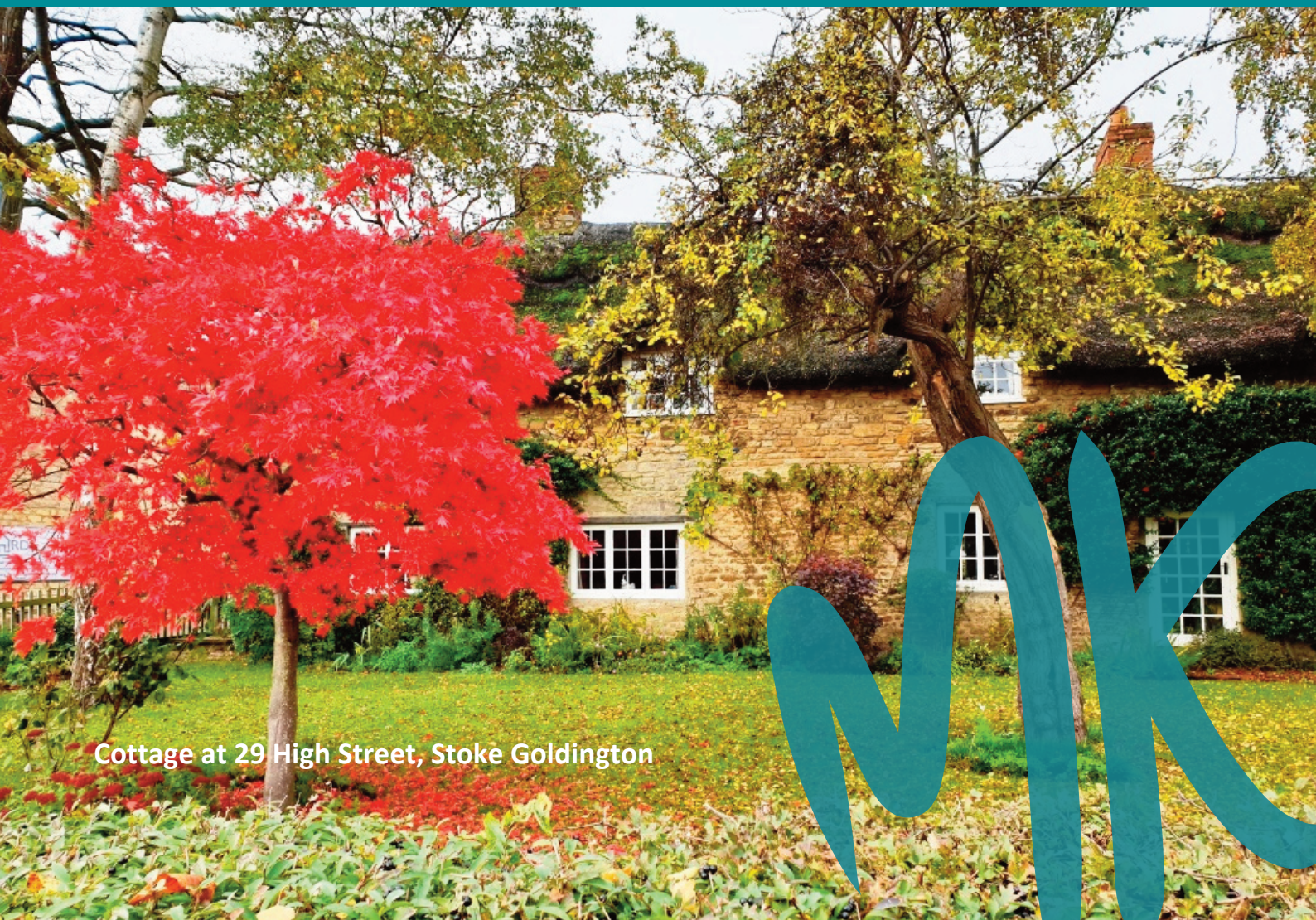
Milton Keynes City Council

Stoke Goldington Conservation Area Review

December 2021

Conservation & Archaeology

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



Cottage at 29 High Street, Stoke Goldington

Historical Development

Little is known of the settlement prior to the Domesday Survey in which it appears as 'Stoches', though a possible Roman settlement and/or building is recorded to the west of the church in Stoke Park Wood and it has also been suggested that traces of an earthwork ditch (seen on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25in map) around the elevated Church Farm may also date to this period or the Iron Age. At the time of the Domesday Survey the Manor was held by William Peveral (a favourite of William I) but by the latter part of the 12th century it was held by Peter de Goldington although the dual name is not recorded until a century later.

Although St Peter's parish church (grade I listed) now lies some distance from the village this was probably not the case in the medieval period. There is archaeological evidence of possible medieval house platforms along Dag Lane although much evidence has been destroyed by ploughing. It is not known when or why the village migrated to the lower ground. The number of surviving 16th century cottages would suggest it could not have been later than that date and the convenience and benefits of being closer to the London to Northampton Road which runs through the village may explain why. One may also conjecture that the migration was associated with use of the brook as a source of drinking water or for agricultural purposes.

The parish (exclusive of Eakley to the north) was enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1770. Apart from Eakley and the hamlet of Ram Alley where only a single cottage survives, the parish remained remarkably stable with six farms still operating in the 1950's exactly as before the Enclosure Award of 1796. Farming from the village has now all but ceased, however.

Significant 19th century developments include the school (1837 extended in 1870 and then again by E Swinfen Harris in 18912). Unusually the school is located at a distance from both the rectory and the church. The rectory of Stoke Goldington was united with that of Gayhurst in 1736 but for over a century there was no resident rector. The Revd Charles Jerdein instituted in 1865 had the ancient rectory pulled down and the new rectory erected at the junction of Dag Lane and High Street. This in turn was superseded by the present rectory built in 1962 but the Victorian building in its attractive grounds remains as an important feature in the village.

A brickworks had become established on the south east flank of the village by the late 19th century and is shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map. The works comprised several brick pits, a long drying shed and 2 scotch kilns. Remains of one kiln were recorded as surviving as high as 3.5m as recently as 1990 but now all appear to have been removed. The brick pits to the north survive as a series of ponds.

Some indifferent 20th century housing development, principally along the northern flanks of the village, and the filling up of gap sites has not provided sufficient additional custom, it seems, to prevent the recent closure of a pub, the White Hart, and indeed the last village shop, which has recently closed its doors perhaps permanently. This is symptomatic of the village's new role as a dormitory settlement located approximately halfway between Northampton and Milton Keynes and the impact of increasing property values which strongly encourages turning over commercial uses to domestic use.

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 Stoke Goldington sits at the confluence of three shallow valleys. Whilst the overburden is the clay, silt and gravel deposits, the land that the valleys cut into has a bedrock of Blisworth Limestone. The use of this stone characterises settlements north of the River Ouse, there being a significant tradition of stone buildings and walls within the villages of North Buckinghamshire where it borders Northamptonshire.

The landscape south and east of Stoke Goldington

Many of Stoke Goldington'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 homogenising late C20th concrete tile to the detriment of local distinctiveness. There are also numerous characterful thatch roofs dotted about the village. Other important materials include timber, metal and glass. In Stoke Goldington the timber framing tradition found elsewhere in the borough, particularly south of the Ouse, is absent.

Blisworth limestone is durable and shelly and is a pale honey-yellow 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 Stoke Goldington surviving stone boundary walls tend to be randomly coursed.

Stone houses line the route of High Street through the village

Only one small quarry at the south east corner of Stoke Park Wood and the gravel pits at the north end of Eakley are marked on the 1st Edition (1880) Ordnance Survey map. As the geological survey confirms that Blisworth limestone is present at both locations it may be that much of the village's building stone originated from these pits, perhaps supplemented by intermittent workings at farm based delves around the settlement. The village once existed at the top of the rise along Dag Lane to St Peter's church (Grade I) and so it may be that as it migrated into the fold of the valley, stone from abandoned buildings was recycled for new dwellings. By the time of the Ordnance Survey first edition's publication the gravel pits are prefixed with 'Old' suggesting production has ceased.

There are numerous examples of stonebuilt cottages and farmhouses in the village, one of the better preserved stands at 50 High Street (grade II listed).

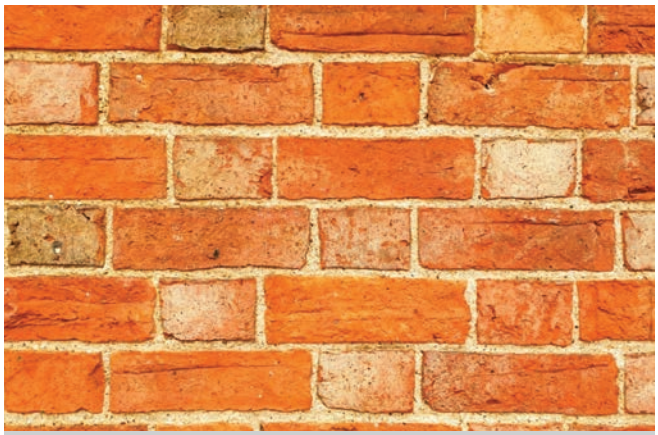
Amongst a number of notable features of this late 17th century farmhouse is the use of randomly coursed rubblestone completely free of any carved ornamentation.

Brickwork is rare in Stoke Goldington, despite the presence of a brickworks during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and is generally relegated to a secondary role as ornamental door and window edgings as on the High Street side of 5 Berkely Close and, notably, for chimneys. Courses of brick were traditionally laid to form regular patterns, or bonds.

Headers and stretchers used alternately created Flemish bond which can be seen at the village shop (currently closed) next door to The Lamb public House and again at 36 and 38 High Street.

Brick detailing around the windows of 5 Berkely Close

The traditional 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 consistent 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.



Brickwork, the lime mortar has been yellowed by the choice and amount of sandy aggregate

Although no specific examples of timber weather boarding were noted during the review survey, other than for the odd remnant gable or basic (and now very ramshackle) shelter building, this material was once in regular use in North Buckinghamshire for midsized barns, shelters /hovels and implement stores. If it existed, it seems to have almost disappeared from Stoke Goldington although some examples may still survive to the rear of roadside buildings.

Early roofing materials would have been long straw thatch or locally made plain clay peg tiles. Long stemmed straw for thatch was once available easily 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 the pronounced ridge detailing as it is flexible enough to wrap over the top of roofs.

Old clay tiles, often with a plain shallow curve that imparts a pleasing slightly jumbled look, are rare in the village but once were likely to have been much more common and may partly explain the presence of the old brickworks in the fields behind the east side of High Street. Later mass produced tiles from the late 19th century onwards which lie much flatter and are more uniform in colour than the handmade kind were popular throughout the 20th century are now commonly found in the village.

Plain clay tiles on a roof in Stoke Goldington

Later, in the early to mid-19th century hard wearing, flat grey slate that could be used on shallower pitches also started to appear. Welsh slate and massproduced tiles have displaced plain clay peg tile and thatch on many older buildings

Timber, glass and 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 'cames' 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 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. 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.

Casement windows; the upper floor has cillless openings and small panes subdivided by lead cames. The glass is not smooth and, in the ground floor timber windows, is puttied into structural (rather than applied) glazing bars. Some windows on the ground floor retain evidence of shutters that have now been removed. The door is a simple plank door with brass knocker and a latch

Doors come in a variety of designs from basic plank doors to ornate Victorian and Edwardian designs. In Stoke Goldington one or two rare early plank doors and some Victorian or Edwardian era doors still 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.

Late Victorian door and frame, note fanlight and the simple chamfer detail to the frame. The knocker and letter box are missing as this is the door to the village reading room rather than a domestic dwelling

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.

Westside Farm

Statement of Special Interest

Much of Stoke Goldington can be seen from High Street as it winds sinuously through the village. The general impression is of a stone built settlement with numerous attractive thatch cottages, most standing facing the road but with occasional side gable ends instead, sometimes at the pavement edge and sometimes set back behind gardens. Later more formally arranged frontages of stone houses stand amongst these, facing front on with pitched tile or slate roofs, their ridges parallel to the road and most often at the pavement edge but also occasionally set back from the road by a short garden.

The prevalence of stone and lack of ornamental treatment imparts an unassuming and undemonstrative character to these robustly built houses and cottages. Towards the centre of the village the buildings stand close to the road confining and enclosing public space to create pleasing, linear, forward views of dwellings of similar scale standing in almost unbroken line on both sides of the road. Where there are gaps intriguing and often unmetalled drives and short access roads lead to hidden collections of buildings, many being former single storey agricultural sheds or hovels now turned to domestic use, and then on by footpath into the fields beyond. These digressions from the road provide points of intrigue and strongly connote the old departure points from the village for labourers working on the land.

In contrast to the enclosed character of the central section, the sense of a village seated in an open rolling, rural landscape is strongest at the southern and northern approaches. The B526 arrives at the southern threshold of the conservation area amidst a grouping of loosely gathered, mostly thatched, cottages. Trees stand in the foreground on the attractive green and in nearby gardens but are also a distant backdrop.

Proceeding north to the green and Westside Lane one becomes aware that the land rises gently to the left (west) yet falls away slightly to the right (east). This circumstance changes imperceptibly when passing through the village by road, which is on a level gradient, so that leaving at the north end the land now falls away to the left and rises up to the right. The road too begins a gradual climb from the Vicarage /Maltings Close onwards. Standing at Orchard close a little further north it becomes apparent that the road is following a shallow valley side through which a stream runs in a hollow whilst the allotments and houses of Mount Pleasant are raised up above the road on the shallow valley's side.

This softly shifting landscape is important because of the views that are created into and across the conservation area. From the higher ground at the south west for example, at the field gate at the end of West Side Lane, there are views back over to Ram Alley and verdant countryside and trees beyond. This location is also enhanced by the presence of the ungentrified and agreeably unkempt West Side Farmhouse, its associated barns, yard, trees, hedges, the pond and the railing bound gardens. At the north End of the Village, from the raised position on Mount Pleasant, there are good views over neatly kept allotments to rooftops on Orchard Way and Dag Lane amongst the varied green hued trees, the dividing road below, invisible.

Footpaths reached from Dag Lane also lead up onto higher ground on the village's west side where the fold that contains the village is, in high summer, so heavily

One of the unmetalled tracks that connects the village to surrounding fields

populated by large and leafy trees, that few buildings, other than those on Dag Lane itself, may be discerned.

Throughout the conservation area are stone and occasional brick walls that simultaneously both divide and link places within the conservation area, their line often edging pavements and trimming grass verges thereby emphasising the course of the road. Hedges are relatively few in the village but for the southern end, where important hedges stand close to the green and around the garden of 29 High Street.

Much character is derived from the cumulative consistency of scale (height and mass) and relatively limited variety of materials used in the village's buildings, the only architectural setpiece, the neogothic rectory, being largely hidden from view and the church now removed from the village on its low hilltop. In other respects, there is a uniformity of height, mass and materials amongst domestic properties. There is also a discernible hierarchy, with dwellings normally placed prominently whilst smaller, subservient outbuildings are placed to the rear or sometimes to one side of the principal building.

The density of layout varies through the village but is most tightly knit along the central section whilst at each end buildings are more loosely gathered.

Roof pitches are consistent with the materials used so that the shallowest pitches are slate and plain tile at about 25 degrees whilst the tallest are in thatch to ensure effective rainwater run off. Most traditional domestic buildings in the village are of two storeys, sometimes with a third half storey attic space. Some of the village's thatched properties are only one and a half storey, however, with just the half storey attic space on the upper floor. Dormer or attic windows are generally absent on two storey dwellings. Where they are present, they are placed about halfway up a tile or taller slate roof or into a gable end of thatched roofs. In one and a half storey thatched buildings the windows of the upper 'half' storey intrude into the thatch to create a dormer type window. This detail is not present on other types of roof in the village, however.

Rooflights are normally absent from domestic property and limited to use on outbuildings but then only sparingly.

The road threads determinedly through the settlement's stone, thatch and tiled houses from which the views, alternately wide and narrow, provide vistas and sometimes glimpsed views of the surrounding grassy meadows and trees within and beyond the village environs.

The village seen from across the allotments of Mount Pleasant

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 the Stoke Goldington 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 hedges, stone walls, picket fencing or, occasionally, estate railings. The use of timber panel fencing and brick walling 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.

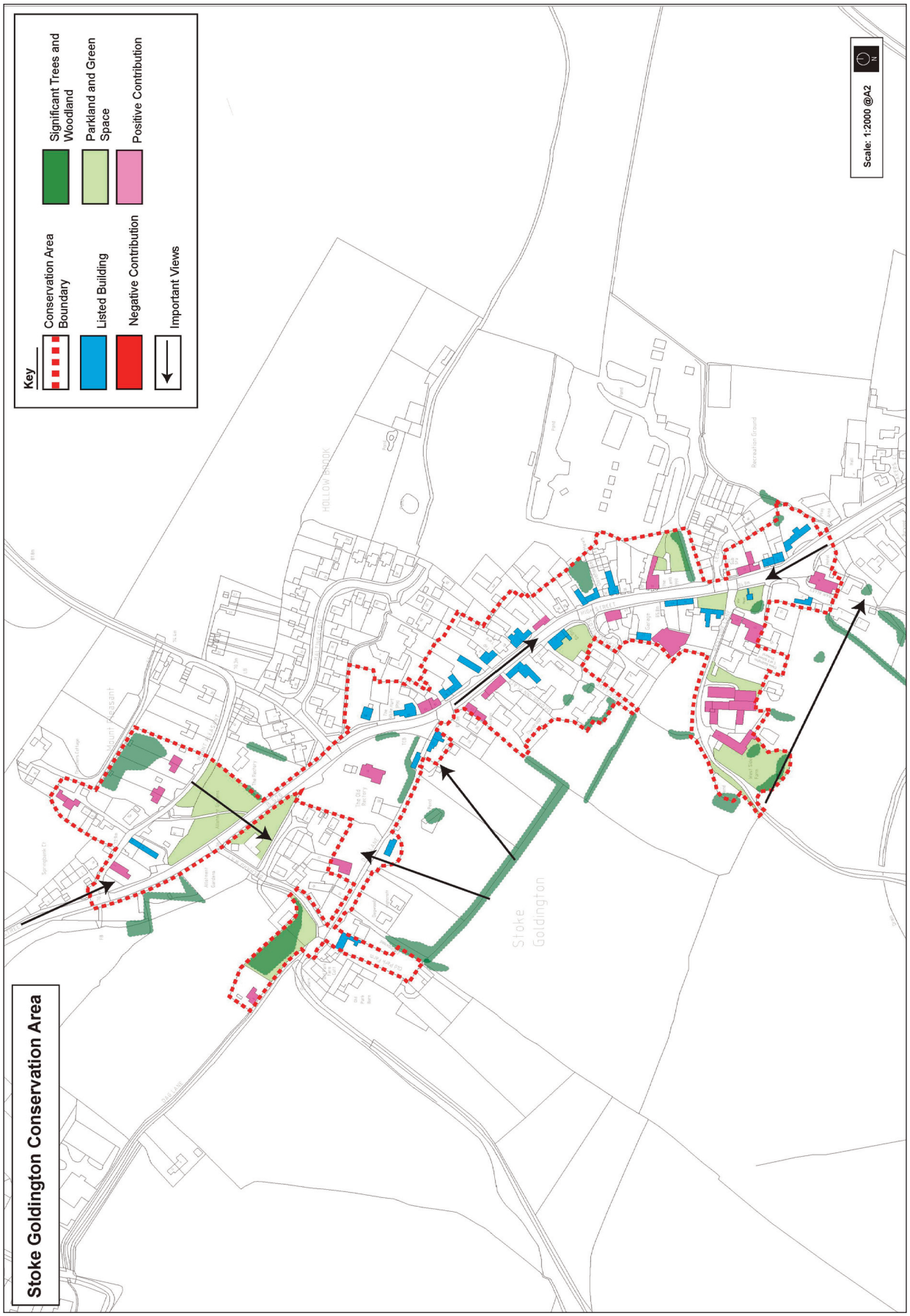
The village's public house is an important community facility. Although the conservation area is covered by special advertising controls the Council will be supportive of the need to advertise sympathetically, operate and undertake events that contribute to village life.

The Council shall continue to offer 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 coordinate works and reinstate disturbed road and pavement surfaces sympathetically. Road improvements should avoid 'urbanising' the rural character of the conservation area.

The road through Stoke Goldington

Stoke Goldington Conservation area - Principal Features



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