



South
Northamptonshire
Council

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REMAINING VILLAGES WITHIN THE DISTRICT AS POTENTIAL CONSERVATION AREAS

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Introduction

In 2011 the Planning Policy and Heritage Team commenced a review of the district's then 54 conservation areas. By the end of March 2017, 61 areas of special architectural or historic interest had been designated as conservation areas with 53 of the 54 pre 2011 conservation areas having been reviewed and re-designated with an up to date boundary, appraisal and management plan.

Within that 7 new conservation areas have been adopted across the District including two significant designations which cover the lengths of the Grand Union and Oxford Canals as they pass through South Northamptonshire.

The start of 2016-2017 financial year also marked the start of a second phase of work which commenced an assessment of the qualities of the district's 38 settlements not benefiting from a conservation area. This in response to the duties placed upon the Council under Section 69 Planning(Listed Buildings Conservation Areas)Act 1990 to *'determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas.'*

Of those 38 settlements 15 remain to be assessed. It should be noted that Preston Deanery has been omitted from this assessment as it is felt to have met some of the criteria outlined by Historic England and therefore justifies further analysis. This report provides a summary of the assessment of the remaining 14 areas which are as follows:

- Ashton
- Caldecote
- Cold Higham
- Grimscote
- Grange Park
- Halse
- Heathencote
- Hinton in the Hedges
- Potterspury
- Quinton
- Warkworth
- Weedon Lois
- Whiston
- Woodend

In determining an area's special interest there are a number of criteria which have been identified by Historic England in regard to the built environment, highlighting the integral features of a settlement that contributes to an area's character. The criterion aims to establish if an area warrants conservation area designation, with regard to its "special architectural or historic interest".

The National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 186, places further emphasis on the concept of "special", stating *"When considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest"*.

Prior to any assessment, there is a stage when a decision is taken as to the significance of an area and the likelihood of conservation area designation addressing relevant problems within that area. The purpose of this process is to consider whether an area has:

- a) sufficient architectural or historic interest for the area to be considered 'special'?
- b) whether this is experienced through its character or appearance? and
- c) whether it is desirable for that character or appearance to be preserved or enhanced, and what problems designation could help to solve

It is considered appropriate to present the assessments of 14 of the villages as one since none have met the criteria set out by Historic England due to predominantly uncharacteristic development. None of these villages are considered to have a special architectural or historic interest sufficient to justify conservation area designation, many as a consequence of their original composition, others because their original form has now been so eroded by piecemeal change or by single/group examples of uncharacteristic development that the villages no longer have a definable special interest or character. The criteria can be viewed in Appendix B.

Within this report several key themes have emerged through the research and analysis. Some of these themes relate to specific building types but others concern more general issues like spatial analysis, setting/views and historic interest.

Historic Interest

Within every Conservation Area the special historic interest is an important component of any potential designation. This component sets out what makes the area special and the impact of its history on its current character and appearance.

The remaining villages all have individual, interesting histories however it is clear that for all these histories have not resulted in retained notable character features, key phases of development, or notable historic events which could then contribute to their special interest.

Historic Development and Plan form

The landscape surrounding the villages hold evidence dating back to the Bronze Age and evidence of Roman occupation. The built form and development of the villages and areas of countryside are evocative of the medieval period. Some have retained medieval buildings and street patterns and occupy landscapes that have areas of ridge and furrow. Their wider landscapes also contain numerous earthworks attaining to the medieval period including manor sites. Whilst the settlements have surrounding archaeology this offers little to their current characters.

The villages tend to be small, with varying morphology. The linear settlements such as Warkworth are aligned along roads passing through the landscape whilst the nucleated settlements such as Hinton in the Hedges tend to occur at the junction of numerous roads, with the junction often marked by a church, around which sit the settlement's oldest dwellings. A number of these villages have expanded since the post war period, and the outskirts are now marked with post war housing. Modern 20th century infill has disrupted most if not all the historic streetscapes with varying materials, styles and form.

The villages all seem to lack a sense of cohesion within the built form. The individual historic units do not interconnect with each other due to modern infill and therefore do not create a cohesive character that of which could be considered “special”.

Architectural Quality and Built Form

The elements of historic landscape that are of national importance are covered by a variety of national heritage designations. Within the districts villages this includes those buildings covered by listing. The remaining built form of the villages has envelopes of historic buildings constructed in a traditional manner of local importance however they are rarely as a collection of buildings representing a range of uses that document the area’s history, nor do they represent the impact of a particular architectural vision for the area. Their materials and features do not contribute to the immediate local distinctiveness or identity of each of the villages. Furthermore, the fenestration on several of the historic properties have been unsympathetically changed resulting in loss of original timber fenestration, roofing materials, and unsympathetic extensions. These changes are not in keeping with the style and age of the properties and dilute the character of the villages.

Building materials across the settlements vary with red brick and local Oolitic limestone, ranging from warm greys to subdued ochres, frequently used with either blue/ grey slate or red pantile roofing. Mixtures of materials are also in evidence, as at Potterspurty and Weedon Lois where a mix of vernacular buildings styles are present. The buildings are typical of modest vernacular buildings in the area being simple in their architectural detail, yet they are not exemplary of local or regional vernacular design. They are therefore not considered to be of sufficient architectural quality to be considered as ‘special’ nor are they grouped together in each of the villages in sufficient number to give each of the settlements a cohesive character.

Setting, Open Space, and Landscape

Surrounding each of the villages are large open fields, which demonstrate the agricultural background of each of the settlements which helps place them within an agrarian context. These areas of land, whilst not of any particular historic or architectural significance, contribute to the setting of the villages. However, these open areas are not considered to contribute to the areas special interest.

Whilst wide views over the landscape are possible from elevated areas, the slight undulating hills and valleys of the district generally have an intimate, human scale, reinforced by landform, small woodlands and hedges screening long distance views and creating enclosure. Even where wide open views are possible, villages, or more often their church towers, offer focal points on the horizon and therefore reduce the perceived scale of the landscape.

Trees, hedges, boundaries and street greenery are important elements of many of the villages not only in public places, but on private land as well. Whilst these soften the development and urbanisation of the settlements, they do not create a character that of which can be defined as “special”.

Conclusion

The recommendation following the assessment of the 14 villages , is based on Historic England criteria (see Appendix A) and the legislation regarding designation of conservation areas, as defined in the Planning (LBCA) act 1990, which states that conservation areas need

to be “areas of special architectural and historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance.” The assessment of these remaining villages has concluded that whilst attractive and of some historic interest they are not considered to fulfil the requirements set out under legislation. Therefore, they are not considered to be areas suitable for conservation area designation. Individual reasons for each village can be found in the Appendix (Appendix B) alongside maps of each of the settlements.