Middleton Cheney is a place of special character and historic interest. This appraisal and management plan sets out the features that contribute to its distinctiveness and identifies opportunities for its protection and enhancement.
Summary

Summary of special interest

The village of Middleton Cheney can be dated to at least 1086 when it was recorded in the Domesday book, however evidence suggests that human activity occurred within the Parish during the prehistoric and Roman periods.

The village is located approximately three miles (five kilometres) to the east of Banbury in the extreme west of the Local Authority District of South Northamptonshire where the upland country dips down towards the Cherwell Valley. The layout of the village and archival evidence show that the current settlement was originally composed of two parts each grouped around a village green.

The current settlement is therefore of a polyfocal type, with the original and expanded settlements of Lower or Nether Middleton being joined to Upper or Church Middleton by late 20th century housing.

This document makes an assessment of the Lower Middleton area to the south east of the current settlement and provides an appraisal and management plan for the Lower Middleton Middleton Cheney Conservation Area.

Key characteristics of the Lower Middleton Conservation Area:

- An attractive and harmonised streetscene is created due to the continuity of the building materials and style. Most buildings are vernacular in style and constructed in locally sourced ironstone.
- Buildings are positioned parallel to the highway, often on the rear of the footpath, creating a sense of enclosure.
- Open spaces form an essential element in the conservation area. Lower Middleton has two registered village greens situated at opposite ends of the settlement.
- Away from the greens, the positioning of buildings along the streetscape, walls and planting help to create a defined boundary and a sense of enclosure and intimacy.
- An informal arrangement of highways with narrow routes and limited paving adds to the area informal qualities and significance.
- Agricultural buildings and those associated with the areas cottage industries are positioned to the side and rear of properties and add interest and depth to the streetscene.

Summary of issues and opportunities

Change is inevitable in most conservation areas and it is not the intention of the designation to prevent the continued evolution of places. The challenge within conservation areas is to manage change in a way that maintains, reinforces and enhances the special qualities of the area.

The protection and enhancement of the special character of the conservation area will owe much to positive management. In addition to the existing national statutory legislation and local planning controls the following opportunities for enhancement have been identified:

- Establish a list of locally significant buildings and policies for their protection.
- Encourage the protection of surviving historic forms and the reinstatement of appropriate architectural details in buildings considered to be of significance to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The use of Article 4 Directions which remove the permitted development rights of dwelling houses will help to achieve this.
- Ensure that all new development is sustainable, high quality, well designed and responds to its context in terms of urban and architectural design.
- Promote the sympathetic management of open space within the conservation area, including verges and to work with the highway authorities and other statutory undertakers to avoid the insertion of inappropriate kerbing, footpaths and other urbanising features which would have a harmful affect on the character of the area.

The Conservation Area Boundary

Parts of Middleton Cheney were originally designated as a conservation area in October 1969 and the boundary has been revised three times since that date in July 1983, October 2000 and March 2013.

The last review saw the area which until that time had been known as the Eastern Conservation Area renamed the Lower Middleton Middleton Conservation Area. Its boundaries were also rationalised and extended to include a stretch of Main Road to the southeast of the settlement considered to be of special interest.
Summary

Figure 1: The boundary of the Lower Middleton Conservation Area.

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1. Introduction and Planning Policy Context

1.1 What is a conservation area

Conservation areas were first introduced under the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. That Act required Local Planning Authorities to identify areas, as opposed to individual buildings, of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas.

Since 1967 some 9,770 conservation areas have been designated in England, including 56 in the South Northamptonshire District to date. The Lower Middleton Middleton Cheney Conservation Area is one of those 56 areas having been last appraised in March 2013.

1.2 Planning Policy context

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the Act of Parliament which today provides legislation for the protection of the nation’s heritage of buildings and places of architectural and historic interest.

Section 69 of the 1990 Act defines a conservation area as:

“an area of architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

The 1990 Act also places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to consider revisions to the boundaries of their conservation areas “from time to time”.

This document is an appraisal of the Lower Middleton Conservation Area and is based on a standard format derived from advice contained within the English Heritage guidance "Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management" published in 2011.

By updating the conservation area appraisal for Lower Middleton, the special character and appearance of the area can continue to be identified and protected. The conservation area appraisal and management plan provide the basis for making informed, sustainable decisions in the positive management, protection and enhancement of the conservation area.

The appraisal provides a clear understanding of the special interest of Lower Middleton by assessing how the settlement has developed, analysing its present day character and identifying opportunities for enhancements. This appraisal has been subject to public consultation and was adopted by South Northamptonshire Council in March 2013 at which time it became a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the conservation area and its setting and other decisions.

The appraisal is not intended to be comprehensive and omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is not of interest.

This appraisal should also be read in conjunction with the wider national and local planning policy and guidance including the National Planning Policy Framework under which a conservation area is deemed to be a heritage asset.

The South Northamptonshire Local Plan was adopted in 1997 and resaved in part on 28 September 2007. Middleton Cheney is considered to be one of the more sustainable settlements within the district under the provisions of that plan and therefore susceptible to development pressure.

Policies EV10 and EV11 of the same document continue and state that:

“The Council will seek to preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of conservation areas.”

and that “planning permission will not be granted for any development proposals outside of a conservation area which have an adverse effect on the setting of the conservation area or any views into or out of the area.”

1.3 What does conservation area status mean?

Conservation area status provides the opportunity to promote the protection and enhancement of the special character of the area. Designation confers a general control over development that could damage the area's character. The details are complex but can be summarised as:

- Most demolition requires permission and will be resisted if the building or structure makes a positive contribution to the area.
- Some minor works are no longer “permitted development” and will require planning permission. Examples include external cladding, satellite antennas and some extensions.
- Most works to trees have to be notified to the Local Planning Authority for its consideration.
- Generally higher standards of design apply for new buildings and alterations to existing ones.
2. Location, Topography and Geology

2.1 Location

Middleton Cheney is located in the south west of Northamptonshire approximately three miles (five kilometres) to the east of Banbury and seven miles (11 kilometres) to the north west of Brackley (Figure 2).

The village is a large sprawling settlement with the fourth largest population within the South Northamptonshire District registering approximately 4,097 inhabitants at the time of writing.

The settlement is situated within an agrarian landscape and although the economy was once dominated by agriculture it is now very much a settlement with a population that out commutes for employment.

Lower Middleton is located at the south eastern end of today's settlement.

Figure 2: Location of Middleton Cheney
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2. Location, Topography and Geology

2.2 Topography and Geology

The Northamptonshire Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Strategies were published by the River Nene Regional Park CIC in 2009. These strategies included environmental, landscape and biodiversity character assessments for the county.

In relation to Middleton Cheney the assessments concluded that the settlement is located within the Environmental Character Area of West Northamptonshire Uplands adjacent to the upper reaches of the Cherwell Valley (Figure 3).

The Uplands are an extensive area stretching from Aynho in the south to Wilbarston in the north with an elevated landscape of hills and valleys that act as the major watershed between some of the region’s principal river systems.

The landscape is underlain by the intractable Lias Group Clays, which are capped locally by the ironstone bearing Marlstone Rock and Northampton Sand Formations.

This geology results in well defined features such as steeply sloping prominent hills that contrast with softer landscapes where capping by a thick mantle of Boulder Clay has occurred.

The area comprises a landscape of predominantly earlier parliamentary enclosure origins with regular patterned fieldscapes, straight hedgerows and linear roads.

In its more immediate context Middleton Cheney is located at approximately 140m (460ft) above mean sea level with the land to the west of the village sloping down to the Cherwell Valley and the Oxfordshire border.

Land cover immediately surrounding the settlement comprises of a combination of arable and pastoral with the distribution closely linked to the landform patterns with pastoral farming dominant on the hills to the west and arable to the flatter lands to the east of the village (Figures 4-6). Fields are generally defined by tall hedgerows and trees.

Figure 3: West Northamptonshire Catchment (Source: River Nene Regional Park)

Figures 4-6: Land cover around Middleton Cheney
Evidence suggests that there may have been human activity within the parish of Middleton Cheney from prehistoric times. Archaeological finds of late Neolithic and Bronze Age flints and Roman pottery have been made in areas around the settlement. It is however not until the Domesday survey of 1086 that occupation is first recorded.

### 3.2 Early Medieval, Medieval and Norman

Three entries for Middleton Cheney are recorded in the Domesday book. The entry for 'Midelton' reports that there were 32 households within the settlement with a taxable value of two geld units. Seven villagers, six smallholders, a slave, a priest and three plough teams are also recorded and it is noted that the Lord of the Manor at the time was Saewulf Almer.

It is later documented that three Manors historically existed within the area of the present settlement. These were Moreton, Grentimaisal and Chester and although no remains of these have been found it has been noted on historical maps of the area that a Manor Farm was situated where the present Middleton House is located which may identify one of the earlier manor sites (Jerrams 1984).

As with many settlements in Northamptonshire the origins of the name Middleton Cheney are Anglo-Saxon. ‘Tun’ or ‘Ton’ is the Saxon word for enclosed farm, village or town. Middle Farm (Tun), possibly a result of its location midway between Purston and Wardington. This is speculated to have been the origins of the village that is known today.

After the Norman Conquest it was common for the incumbent Lords to add their family name to the Manor they had been awarded. Simon de Chenduit held the Manor of Middleton in a 12th century survey and John de Curci held a part in 1205. The name “Cheney” ultimately derives from medieval Latin, ‘casinetum’ (which in old French becomes ‘chesnai’) which means oak grove (http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/search). It is from these two facts that the current settlement name is considered to derive.

Evidence shows that from at least the reign of Henry II in the 12th century the settlement of Middleton Cheney has functioned as two separate but closely connected hamlets, Upper or Church Middleton and Lower or Nether Middleton (Baker 1889).

These two hamlets were located near to a prehistoric track-way which today runs to the north of the present village and is known as the Banbury Lane. This was the main medieval route from Banbury to Northampton and one of the earliest roads to cross the county. The lane also helped connect the area to both Evesham and Bristol both important settlements at the time. The settlement was also close to the historic Welsh Lane a well known drovers’ road connecting the area to Wales and London.

The existence of these ancient routes meant that many drovers and travellers would pass by the settlement on their way to various markets, towns and cities including nearby Banbury.

Further evidence of settlement and the significance of the parish through this early period can be seen in records held by the Church of England. These report on a church in the area although this is likely to have been demolished, with the
3. History and development

current All Saints Church only dating from around 1300 (Figure 7).

The present church has been altered considerably since its construction including the removal of its original steep thatched roof which was replaced with a shallower lead covered roof in the late 15th century. At around this time the tower was also rebuilt in its present form. It extends 153 feet above ground level.

The stature and status of All Saints Church is a reflection of the prosperity of the area during this early period, much of which can be attributed to the agricultural industry and fertile lands in which the village is located.

When the Domesday survey was undertaken the settlement can be seen to have had an established farming community which was the main source of employment in the area.

Farming grew and by 1341 Oxfordshire, including the area around Banbury in which Middleton Cheney is located, had been placed amongst the top five counties in the country for the cost of wool. By 1503 it ranked as the second richest county in England. This early development of the woollen industry in the area is shown by the fact that the City of Oxford was one of the earliest settlements in England to have a weavers guild, as early as 1130 (Wood-Jones 1963).

The prosperity of the village and surrounding area was based on its rich and fertile agricultural lands. These sustained a mixture of pastural and arable farming which continued through the middle ages. In 1608 the market town of Banbury, three miles to the west of Middleton Cheney, was granted licence to hold a wool market by James I. The town and the surrounding area became renowned for its textile industries.

3.3 16th -17th centuries

The 16th and 17th centuries saw further changes to the farming industry with the virtual end of subsistence farming to fulfil the increased demand for produce and land which accompanied the rise of prices during this period.

As a result of this turn in fortunes all social classes in the area including the population of Middleton Cheney would have known better conditions and are likely to have possessed land and buildings of a better quality than those of the less prosperous regions. Many of the newly wealthy consolidated their good fortune by building new homes and some fine examples of 17th century buildings can still be seen within both Upper and Lower Middleton.

These include the former Yeoman’s House and its associated outbuildings now called Springfield House on Glovers Lane, which dates from the 1640s and Appletree Farmhouse on the Main Road in Lower Middleton (Figures 8 and 9).

A further indication of the prosperity of the village in the 17th century can be seen in works that were undertaken to the church at that time including, between 1640 and 1693, the addition of five bells which were cast for the church by a foundry in the neighbouring village of Chacombe. These remain in use today.

It was also during this time that the English Civil War found its way to Middleton Cheney when on 6 May 1643 at Town Field, on the outskirts of the village (near to the present day Moors Drive) a battle took place, during which it is reported that 217 rebels were killed.

This is corroborated by Parish records which show the burial of 46 parliamentarian soldiers in the churchyard the following day. It is now believed that the current First World War memorial was erected on the site of these graves.

3.4 18th Century

Agriculture continued to dominate through to the 18th century and evidence of this activity and its influence is still discernable throughout the village today, whether it be in the former agricultural buildings and farm house that remain
3. History and development

and are now used for residential purposes or in the names of the streets.

One such example is the road name ‘Tenlands’ which can be found on the edge of the Upper Middleton Conservation area. This name is derived from an old field-name handed down from the Medieval period when the farming method was that of “Ridge and Furrow.”

A nearby field was marked out into ten strips (or lands), hence ‘Tenlands’ with each strip being farmed individually. Five lands at the top of the field ran from north to south and the five at the bottom from east to west.

By the end of the 18th century the socio-economic changes that were occurring across the country had reached Middleton Cheney. These changes resulted in the common fields of the parish being enclosed under an Act of Parliament in 1769. The Enclosures Act lead to unemployment amongst the agricultural workforce of the settlement. However the decline of one industry saw the growth of another as many of the unemployed looked to a developing hosiery industry for employment.

Confirmation of this can be seen in an edition of the Northampton Mercury dated 15th July 1771 where an advertisement sought with immediate effect:

“…..near twenty Journeymen Framework-Knitters in the Silk Branch…..”

The growth of the industry is further corroborated through early census figures for the village which recorded amongst other occupations: 10 Framework Knitters, 20 Plush Weavers, 6 Weavers, a Wool-Stapler and a Wool-Carder.

A key figure in the hosiery industry in the 18th century was William Horton. Born in Leicester in 1744 he moved to Middleton Cheney at a young age and commenced employment as a stocking frame repairer and setter-up.

Horton was an enterprising man who helped to mechanise the countries hosiery industry making himself considerably wealthy in the process. Horton had a considerable impact on Middleton Cheney helping to develop and sustain the hosiery industry within the village with evidence of this present in the built environment today (Figures 10-11).

One example is the outbuilding to the rear of the large thatched cottage on Middle Green which was once a frameworker knitting workshop into which large windows were inserted to allow the workers as much natural light as possible.

Other cottage industries developed within the settlement at this time and included clockmaking, glovemaking and shoemaking. The latter appears to have been located on Glovers Lane in Upper Middleton and may have been closely linked with a tannery once situated close to the present Springfield House beyond the bottom of the lane.

Horton’s wealth also allowed him to purchase a large part of the Chetwode Family Estate at Warkworth and with it the title of ‘Lord of the Manor of Middleton Cheney’.

It was also during the 18th century that the first schools were developing within the village. It is reported that the first two schools were located in All Saints Church with the east end of the south chancel used for this purpose and separated from the main body of the church by a screen. A separate entrance into the building was also created and this is still discernable today under the last of the southern-most windows. There was also a gallery for the use of the school children which was constructed at the west end of the north aisle in 1797.

3.5 19th Century

The 19th century saw the construction of the first national school. This was built in 1815 and was accessed from the road to the south of the Church which at that time continued along the east of the church yard joining what is now...
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Rectory Lane. This road can be clearly seen on early maps of the village and was stopped up by order of the magistrate in 1833 and given to the parish to enlarge the churchyard.

It was also in 1833 that William Horton Lord of the Manor of Middleton Cheney died. His estate passed to his son then eventually his daughter, Mary Ann, a spinster who inherited the title ‘Lady of the Manor of Middleton Cheney’.

Like her father before her, Mary Ann had a significant impact on shaping the built form of Middleton Cheney and neighbouring settlements. Not only did she bequeath money for the erection of the Horton Hospital in the nearby Banbury, she also built herself a large manor house within Middleton Cheney called The Holt.

Although demolished some years ago some elements of the Holt estate remain in the form of the coach house and boundary walls at the entrance to the Tenlands estate (Figure 12) and to the north of Mansion Hill. Other works included the building of the Almshouses on Main Road, originally for the workers of her estate and a generous contribution towards the restoration of the Parish Church in the 1860s.

A major renovation of the church was undertaken by George Gilbert Scott from 1864. Most of these works were internal although an important collection of stained glass windows were also added. These were designed by William Morris and his colleagues and led to the famous architectural historian William Pevsner describing All Saints Church as a place of “unforgettable enjoyment.”

Perhaps a contributing factor to the works that were undertaken by the Church of England at that time was the rise of the nonconformist population of the village. By 1875 it is reported that non conformists were however present in the village long before this. It has been suggested that the present day New Inn Public House was most probably the venue for the first Baptist meeting within the village in about 1740.

Similarly a cottage in Royal Oak Lane is noted as being the primitive Methodist Chapel within the settlement in 1814. Indeed it was also during the late 19th century that the Co-operative movement began in Middleton Cheney.

The Co-operative Society originally arrived in the village in 1869 and was located in existing premises on Church Lane from where it ran its store. In 1911 following many years of successful trading a purpose built Co-operative building was erected at the junction of Church Lane and High Street. (www.middletoncheney.org.uk) The non-conformists were however present in the village long before this. It has been suggested that the present day New Inn Public House was most probably the venue for the first Baptist meeting within the village in about 1740.

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3. History and development

Street, shop on the ground floor and a hall at first floor level. This was used for many village organisations for their meetings and activities. The building remains in place today although it is now used for office and residential purposes (Figure 13).

In 1886 the Middleton Co-operative Industrial Land and Building Society was formed with the objective of providing houses and other amenities for working people. It flourished for over 60 years and at the time of the organisation’s demise in 1948, they are reported to have held 36 buildings and over 13 acres of land within Middleton Cheney (Jerrams 1984), having a great impact on the shaping the village that is seen today.

Further limited development occurred within the settlement during the remainder of the 19th century including the construction of the current primary school on junction of High Street and Main Road in 1856 (Figure 14). As with many of the rural districts at that time it was normal for labouring families to send their children to work at an early age. A custom which endured in Middleton Cheney where many boys went to work on the land and girls in many of the cottages industries which still remained.

3.6 20th Century

Much development occurred during the 20th century including the erection of the war shrine in 1919 (Figure 15). Significant housing development also took place and...
dramatically changed the character and appearance of the settlement, weakening the link of the historic core to the countryside beyond. Some infill development and demolition also occurred within the cores.

3. History and development

Figure 16: Middleton Cheney 1843—1893
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3. History and development

3.8 Archaeological

The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) reports Prehistoric and Roman activity and settlement within the parish of Middleton Cheney.

This is illustrated through the cropmarks of overlapping enclosures and ditches to the west of the village which cover a total area of about two hectares and are evident from the air.

Finds have also been made on the ground with a dense scatter of worked flints of a late Neolithic and Bronze Age type covering an area of approximately five hectares in the south east of the Parish. In a similar area Roman pottery has also been found suggesting activity and settlement during that period too.

In spite of these finds the archaeological record for the parish is far from complete and there is clearly room for further investigative work.

Further opportunities to increase our understanding of Middleton Cheney’s past should be taken when sites for development and research opportunities are recognised and come forward.

Figure 17: Middleton Cheney is an area rich in archaeology (the broken green lines indicate find areas) © Crown copyright. All rights and database rights reserved. South Northamptonshire Council 100022487 2013
4.1 Land Use

With the exception of the New Inn public house the Lower Middleton Conservation Area has an almost entirely residential land use with the barns, workshops and outbuildings which originally served the settlements’ former industries now used mainly for residential purposes.

4.2 Settlement form

Lower Middleton has a fairly linear settlement form with most of the development set primarily on the southern side of the main road which runs south east to west through this part of the village.

There are however exceptions to this with development situated around the Middle Green at the western end of Main Road and a larger nucleated cluster set around the historic winding routes of Rose Hall Lane, Royal Oak Lane, Braggintons Lane and Salmons Lane (The ‘Lanes Cluster’).

4.3 Street Pattern, footpaths, means of enclosure

The main road through Lower Middleton runs south-east to west arching around a late 20th century housing development and the ‘Lanes Cluster’ to the south and beneath the Middle Green in the west of the area. Today the Lower Middleton Conservation Area (and historic village) has been almost entirely surrounded by modern late 20th century development with the historical footpaths and links to the open countryside on which the settlements economy was once based reduced and weakened although tantalising glimpses of the surrounding landscape still exist in places.

Throughout the conservation area the highways are surfaced in...
tarmacadam with footways and footpaths mainly surfaced in that material too. Modern concrete kerbing of a municipal style is the predominant edging material although more traditional setts are found on occasion.

Many of the secondary routes and lanes within the conservation area have no formal footways, with buildings and boundary treatments directly abutting the highway in their place. This adds to the area's special character and interest.

Overhead wires are found throughout the conservation area as is highway signage and traffic calming measures. All detract from its special quality.

A strongly defined boundary with buildings and walls creating a strong building line is present throughout the area even around Middle Green. However the level of intimacy and enclosure varies significantly from east to west and again in the cluster to the south.

In general buildings are set close to the edge of the highway with ridge lines running parallel to the road. Where on occasion this is not the case and some buildings are set back within their plots, linking boundary walls can be found constructed close to the highways edge. These help to maintain the sense of enclosure and positioning seen elsewhere within the conservation area.

4.4 Open Spaces, Trees and Hedges

The Lower Middleton Conservation Area gives an impression of a vegetated area with trees, hedges and other forms of soft landscaping forming an essential element which helps to define its character (Figures 19-21).

The nature and impact of these green features vary as you move through the area with the most obvious being the two registered village greens Middle Green and Lower Green (Figures 22-23). These vary in size and scale with Middle Green being roughly triangular in shape and open in nature whilst at the opposite end of the conservation area Lower Green can be found. This is much smaller and is enclosed on three sides by a horseshoe of development including the listed buildings of Nos 17, 21 and 24 Main Road. Both greens add space and interest to an otherwise developed area.

Away from these key features the public realm makes a limited contribution to the green nature of the village with planting mainly being found within the gardens of domestic properties.
This helps to soften what could otherwise be a harsh built environment, complementing the built form at the same time.

Elsewhere trees and other planting help to both reinforce the means of enclosure where buildings, walls and fences are not present as well as tempering the transition between historic and modern properties.

The trees and plants are both deciduous and coniferous in variety so whilst their impact is greatest during the summer months, it is nonetheless not lost entirely throughout the winter.

4.5 Scale and massing

The built environment throughout the conservation area is generally of a fine grained domestic scale with a mixture of terraced and detached houses with varying eave and ridge heights. Most buildings are located close to the highway’s edge with ridge lines that follow the road alignment and assist in creating a coherent street.

There are however some buildings set at an angle to the road, especially within the ‘Lanes Cluster’ and to the north of the green where buildings vary in mass and positioning. This helps to create a varied series of building compositions.

The domestic scale of the buildings is reflected in their massing with most footprints being fairly linear. These linear buildings usually have a fairly narrow footprint with a wider frontage. Other buildings which have a narrow frontage form groups of terraces which help to enhance their visual impact. Accretions and rear extensions are single and two storey in height and often of differing materials denoting their later date of construction.

Most older properties within the settlement have two internal floors of accommodation. Although there is some slight range in scale to include the grander properties where a steeper roof pitch and higher ceiling heights create greater presence and also some use of the roof space. It is however the smaller scale vernacular cottages which dominate.

4.6 Views

The post-war housing development of Middleton Cheney has significantly limited views into and out of the Lower Middleton Conservation Area, almost entirely divorcing it from the agrarian landscape on which its early prosperity and growth was based.

This is wholly the case in relation to the ‘Lanes Cluster’ where views are internal, progressive and short, yet nonetheless important. Views in that area are channelled due to the...
4. Spatial Analysis

winding nature of the lanes with the positioning of buildings and boundary walls adding to the intimate and enclosed character of this part of the conservation area.

Along Main Road in the west of the area views are also progressive as they follow the more linear route of the highway. In this area significant but glimpsed views exist of the green looking west along Main Road.

At the opposite end of Main Road views into and out of the area towards the A422 are framed by the built form and mature vegetation of Middleton House and the historic properties to its west, providing an interesting gateway to the conservation area.

It is also along Main Road that tantalising glimpses of the open countryside exist eastwards between the development on that side of the highway. At the far extreme of the area a rare but fuller view of the open countryside is still afforded as you look east from the edge of Middleton House towards the neighbouring settlement of Thenford (Figure 28).

*Figures 25 - 28: Progressive, channelled and open views contribute to the significance of the conservation area.*
4. Spatial Analysis

Figure 29 Important Spatial Features in the Lower Middleton Conservation Area.
5. Architectural Analysis

5.1 Building age, type and style

Many of the buildings in the Lower Middleton Conservation Area date from the 17th and 18th centuries and have been constructed using traditional materials and methods including a variety of coursed squared and rubble ironstone.

Most properties are of a local vernacular style, many of a small domestic scale, especially in the ‘Lanes Cluster’. There are however a number of larger scale properties found throughout the conservation area and a number constructed with high gables resulting in steeply pitched roofs.

Evidence also exists of similar properties which have had their roof pitches altered over the years to accommodate a new cover material (Figure 30).

5.2 Materials

Standardised materials and design features help to create a sense of unity throughout the conservation area with the predominant building material being an orangey/brown coloured ironstone which would historically have been locally sourced. The darker of this stone is more abundant in the ‘Lanes Cluster’ and at the eastern end of the Main Road, with the properties surrounding Middle Green utilising the lighter coloured material.

This local stone is found in both large and small properties and in both polite and vernacular architecture. The stone is laid in various ways from building to building but is commonly seen as coursed rubble stone and then coursed squared stone (Figure 31).

Other materials such as red brick and render are used sparingly and are mainly seen in later additions and alterations or on infill buildings.

Brick, limestone and ironstone are also used in the construction of the numerous linking boundary walls. Again this continuity of material throughout the conservation area helps to create a harmonised appearance.

5.3 Roofscape

Originally many of the properties within the conservation area would have been thatched however, many of these roofs have now been replaced and only a limited number of properties with this traditional roofing material can still be seen. These include No.1 Rose Hall Lane and properties on the Upper Green (Figures 32-33). These surviving thatched roofs are now mainly covered in combed wheat straw which is not the traditional material for the area which would have been long straw.

Most of the buildings within the Lower Middleton Conservation Area now have either slate or tile roofs which would often have replaced an earlier covering in a different material. Other roofing materials include artificial stone and cement tiles these are however not traditional and cause harm to the significance of the conservation area. Although dormer windows have been added to many properties in recent years, especially those buildings around Middle Green, rooflines are generally simple and uncluttered. This helps to reinforce the strong building line along the street frontage.

Older properties within the conservation area have multiple chimney stacks, regularly seen at the ridge on the gable end or as central stacks. Most chimneys are constructed of red brick to modest proportions and are functional in appearance. Other buildings have stone chimneys which help to create an interesting and diverse roofscape.

Figures 30: Traditional buildings with raised eaves showing evidence of an earlier roof cover.

Figures 31: Traditional building constructed using coursed squared ironstone

Figures 32: Thatch roofs were historically a traditional feature throughout the village.
5. Architectural Analysis

5.4 Windows

Casement windows are the most common style of windows within the conservation area and are typical of vernacular properties. There are only a limited number of surviving original windows to be found on properties within the Lower Middleton Conservation Area, as most have been replaced with modern alternatives.

The windows that are present are either constructed in timber, metal or uPVC. Unfortunately a number of modern replacements have found their way into some older buildings causing harm to their character and appearance and as such impacting on the significance of the conservation area.

A small number of sash windows are also present on some of the larger properties within the conservation area as well as a small number of surviving stone mullions, with either fixed or part opening frames (Figures 33 and 34).

Although dormer windows are a characteristic on a number of older properties within the village especially those that were originally thatched a number of dormers have been added to properties within the conservation area following their construction. These later additions often sit uncomfortably within the roofslope and in general are not considered to be a feature worthy of replication.

Most upper floor windows in the conservation area are set tight to the eaves or just below and have a mixture of either simple timber or stone lintels with stone, tile, mortar or timber cills.

The proportion of window openings within facades are typical of traditional vernacular buildings with there being an emphasis on the horizontal with the opening being relatively small in comparison to the amount of stone seen within the elevation.

5.5 Doors and Porches

A mixture of both plank doors and panelled doors dominate throughout the conservation area.

In an unfortunately high number of instances traditional doors have been replaced with modern alternatives, even on occasion uPVC. This is not a traditional material and has a significant impact on the character of both the individual building and wider area.

Porches are not a traditional feature within the conservation area but are seen frequently on properties on and adjacent to Middle Green. These usually take the form of projecting gable canopies above front doors, with most appearing to be later additions.

Figures 33 and 34: A variety of window styles exist within the conservation area.
5. Architectural Analysis

5.6 Positive Buildings

Figure 35 identifies buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. This contribution may be in one or more of the following ways:

- Buildings which provide evidence of the area’s history and development,
- Buildings of architectural merit,
- Buildings with local historical associations,
- Buildings which exemplify local vernacular styles,
- Groups of buildings which together make a positive contribution to the streetscape.

There should be a presumption in favour of their retention in all but exceptional circumstances.

A number of these important buildings are listed as they are of national importance because of their historic or architectural interest. It is an offence to undertake alterations to a listed building without first gaining permission to do so from the Local Planning Authority.

Figure 35: Positive buildings
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6. Character Areas

6.1 Introduction

Whilst sharing many common characteristics and features the character and special interest of the Lower Middleton Conservation Area varies as you travel through the village.

Areas display different characters and their significance is derived from a combination of differing factors. As such the Lower Middleton Conservation Area has been divided into four sub-areas known as character areas, as seen in Figure 36.

These four areas and the characteristics which make them special are discussed in more detail on the following pages.

Figure 36: The Character areas of the Lower Middleton Conservation Area.
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6. Character Areas

6.2 Character Area One: The Middle Green

As the name suggests the focal point of this character area is the Registered Village Green, known as Middle Green.

Middle Green is roughly triangular in shape and divided into two by a roadway linking its southern and northern boundaries. It is bordered to the north, south and west by residential properties with the tapering form of the green and the position of the main road restricting development to the east.

The area has a unique character being both insular and spacious, domestic and rural at the same time.

This special character is contributed to in part by the informality of the highways which run to the west and north of the green. None benefit from footways or have defined edges. It is further enhanced as a result of a variety in the positioning, scale and design of the areas buildings which present themselves in three distinct groupings.

To the south of the green and beyond the main road a substantial terrace of vernacular ironstone properties has been constructed a short distance from the edge of the highway. To the front of these properties domestic gardens with semi mature vegetation add interest and depth to the street scene. Whilst to the east a stone and red brick former agricultural barn of a similar scale is located and provides evidence of the areas former agricultural past.

West of the green a terrace of properties delineates the highway boundary. The properties within this terrace are varied in both scale and design ranging from one and a half to three stories in height. Their positioning immediately on the rear of the highway, which along that stretch has no footpath, further enhances the areas somewhat informal character.

The northern side of the green has a more rural character and appearance still and is characterised by larger detached vernacular properties of varying ages located in more substantial plots set a short distance from the highway.

Boundary walls provide a means of enclosure in this area which historically opened out onto the countryside, with building positions and ancillary structures telling a story of the areas past agricultural uses. The Valenciennes Farm complex (previously Yew Tree Farm with substantial land holdings) is of great importance and interest in this regard.

As with all properties in this area these buildings are constructed of ironstone providing unity and cohesion through their materials of construction.
Due to its shape the green’s eastern end is the highway which runs in that direction past Lexton House.

Views along that stretch of highway away from the green are limited due to the nature of the road and the positioning of buildings, structures and vegetation. All of which contribute to the insular character and special interest of the area.

Key characteristics:

- A spacious area set around a large registered village green.
- Building positioning and the alignment of the highway limits views in all directions creating an insular character.
- Roads to the north and west of the green with no footpaths or formalised edges add to the areas informal character.
- Buildings of a vernacular and functional scale and design.
- Buildings orientated parallel to the highway contribute to a defined boundary.
- A predominant use of ironstone adds a sense of uniformity and cohesiveness to the built form.
- Mature vegetation, including a number of significant trees, add interest and enhance the areas rural qualities.

Key opportunities and threats:

- The insertion of a more formal highway arrangement around the green would significantly harm the special qualities of the area.
- Opportunities exist to rationalise street clutter, traffic calming measures, telegraph poles and street lighting. This would enhance the significance of the area.
- An opportunity exists to improve building facades particularly through the retention of traditional and the replacement of inappropriate windows and doors.
- The loss of trees and other vegetation would harm the qualities of the area.
- The loss of former agricultural and formal industrial buildings would cause harm.
6. Character Areas

6.3 Character Area Two: Main Road West

This small character area is effectively a linking area between the Middle Green, Main Road East and the Lanes Cluster Character Areas. It nonetheless has a distinct and special character worthy of recognition and discussion.

The area runs from the junction of Royal Oak Lane in the east to the western boundaries of Nos 48 and 57 Main Road as they approach Middle Green.

The area has a strong linear character but is dominated by the main road through its centre.

A defined highway boundary exists with buildings and boundary walls constructed tight to the rear of the footpaths. Boundary walls vary in scale with those to Lexton House being of a substantial height dominating the footway beneath.

A number of the buildings in this area are set back from the highway edge, also in an elevated position, but their positioning has little impact on the character of the area as a result of the dominance of the boundary walls and mature vegetation which give the area a somewhat insular character.

The Grade II listed 17th century Lexton House presents a key landmark in this area. This is a property of some significance within the history of the village and in its elevated position, gable on to the highway, provides a key focal point in views from both the east and the west.

On the whole most buildings are of a domestic scale and vernacular in style constructed of the same local orangey ironstone as the boundary walls. Again this continuity of material throughout the area helps to create a harmonised appearance.

Key characteristics:
• Linear focus with Main Road dominating surroundings
• Buildings and substantial boundary walls positioned on the highways edge creating a sense of enclosure and intimacy.
• Prominent use of ironstone in the built environment
• Insular and inward facing sense of space
• Views focused along main road
• Buildings are vernacular in style with a domestic scale

Key opportunities and threats:
• Lexton House dominates streetscape in scale and detailing
• Boundary walls separate buildings from the highway edge
• Footpaths to both sides of the highway generate a subtle sense of openness
• Substantial trees and other vegetation add scale and variety to the area and further enhancing the sense of enclosure and intimacy

- Opportunities to enhance the streetscape by under grounding overhead cables
- The loss of boundary walls and trees would erode the intimate character of the area and cause harm to its significance.
6. Character Areas

6.3 Character Area Three: The Lanes Cluster

The Lanes Cluster is set slightly below Main Road and the village to the north with the land falling in a southerly direction from the junctions of Rose Hall Lane, Royal Oak Lane and Salmons Lane with Main Road.

The Cluster is dissected by these three roads which are narrow winding routes with no footpaths and carriageway widths well below modern highway standards. In some parts they measure no more than 1.8 metres (six feet) in width and are better suited to the pedestrian than the motor vehicle.

This area was once densely developed but many older buildings have now been replaced with modern houses and bungalows. The impression however is still one of an area of some density with a random arrangement of old and modern housing linked by boundary walls.

Buildings and walls combine with the narrow winding nature of the routes to give this part of the conservation area a strong intimate character and scale with an almost overbearing sense of enclosure.

Trees and other planting help to both reinforce the means of enclosure where buildings, walls and fence are not present and add interest and variety. Through their added height and density planting adds to and enhances existing built form as well as tempering the transition between old and modern properties. Species are both deciduous and coniferous in variety so whilst their impact is greatest during the summer months, it is nonetheless not lost entirely through the winter.

Buildings vary in mass and positioning and this helps to create a varied series of building compositions.

Standardised materials and design features however help to create a sense of unity throughout the Lanes Cluster Character Area with the predominant building material being a dark orangey/brown coloured ironstone which would historically have been locally sourced.

A large number of properties have no entrance door and limited window openings located on the main street facing façade with access being gained either through doors on the gable ends or the rear elevation. This is a pattern of fenestration which contributes to the enclosed nature and special character of the area which for the most part is quiet and peaceful with limited traffic and activity within the street.

The post-war development of Middleton Cheney and the topography of the area limits all views into and out of the Cluster physically divorcing it from the agrarian landscape on which the settlements early prosperity and growth was once based isolating it from the remainder of the settlement at the same time. This reinforces the intimate and enclosed character of this part of the conservation area as do views which are channelled and progressive due to the winding nature of the lanes with the positioning of buildings and boundary walls creating a sense of interest as one moves though the area.

Within the Cluster overhead wires are limited and mostly confined to Rose Hall Lane. As a result of the narrowness of the routes some highways signage and bollards are present which detract from the character of the area.
6. Character Areas

Key characteristics:

- Buildings of varying mass and positioning help produce a varied streetscape.
- Buildings are vernacular in style with a domestic scale and massing.
- Overbearing sense of enclosure created by the positioning of buildings and walls.
- Narrow roads with no footpaths create an intimate feeling.
- Continuity of materials and the use of ironstone harmonises the built development.
- Properties tend to have access doors located away from the main façade increasing sense of enclosure.
- Horizontal emphasis to the built form reinforcing and focusing views along the streetscape.
- Changing topography create channelled and progressive views.
- Vegetation adds both interest and further reinforces the means of enclosure.

Key opportunities and threats:

- The removal of boundary walls and buildings which contribute to the intimate character would cause harm.
- Removal of vegetation which reinforces the means of enclosure would cause harm to the character.
- The insertion of inappropriate openings within currently unbroken elevations would cause harm.
- Opportunity to enhance the public realm with improved surfacing materials
- Threat to historic character through the loss of traditional materials and features.

Figures 47 - 50: The intimate character of the Lanes Cluster is enhanced through vegetation and the positioning of boundary walls.
6. Character Areas

6.4 Character Area Four: Main Road East

This area forms part of the historic Lower Middleton settlement dating from at least the 17th century with suggestions that a Manor was present there in the medieval period. The area has a strong linear character and is dominated by the main road both visually and in terms of its includes a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets including a village green and a number of listed buildings of national importance.

This section of the conservation area originally had a stronger, open, more rural character compared to the remainder of the village. Historically the eastern side of the road was undeveloped and utilised for agricultural purposes. It is thought that this is as a result of the historic ownership of land which may have formed part of one of Middleton’s former Manors. This open character is still discernable today and can be seen in the looser, lower scale development found on the eastern side of the highway.

Farm complexes were located along this stretch of the road and a number of these are still legible in the built form of the area with many outbuildings being found to the side and rear of properties including Manor Farm. These former agricultural buildings are a key element of the character of the settlement and along with other outbuildings provide an insight into some of the industries and activities which developed and took place in the village, some in association with the well documented agricultural and textile trades.

The positioning of buildings within the area varies as you move along the street. Larger properties are found set back slightly within their plots with gardens and boundary treatments to the front whilst the smaller domestic properties are positioned close to the highway edge.

Buildings are generally modest in scale although one or two larger properties are found at opposite ends of the area, an indication of the former status of their owners. The majority of older properties within the area have two internal floors of accommodation. There is some slight range in scale to include some larger properties where a steeper roof pitch and higher ceiling heights create greater presence and also some use of the roof space. It is however the smaller scale vernacular cottages which dominate.

Due to the positioning and scale of buildings and boundary walls a

Figure 51: Positioning of buildings and walls create a defined boundary

Figure 52 and 53: Vegetation contributes to the qualities of this linear character area
6. Character Areas

defined boundary is present to the west of Main Road creating a strong streetscape, maintaining what has been seen here historically. As you move along this built form interesting glimpses of rear yards can be seen between buildings.

Older properties within the area tend to have a narrow depth with a wide frontage; this gives the buildings a stronger sense of mass and creates a more substantial appearance compensating for their vernacular style and scale. There are some examples within this area where buildings do have a narrower frontage, although these tend to form terraces as this enhances their visual impact. Accretions and rear extensions are single and two storeys in height and are often constructed in differing materials denoting their later date of construction.

The continuity of materials and features, including casement windows which dominate and are set tight beneath the eaves or just below on vernacular properties, help to create a sense of cohesion throughout the area. The predominant building material is an orangey/brown coloured ironstone which would historically have been locally sourced. This local stone is found in the majority of historic buildings ranging from the larger buildings down to the small scale vernacular properties. The stone is laid in various ways from building to building but is commonly seen as coursed rubble stone or coursed squared stone.

This continuity of material throughout not only the buildings but the connecting elements of the conservation area help to create a harmonised appearance and increase the sense of enclosure, particularly around the former manorial site.

A small registered green, known as Lower Green, can be found approximately halfway along Main Road on its western side and is enclosed on three sides by a horseshoe of development.

This area works well within the streetscape as it provides an attractive arrangement of buildings, including the Grade II listed buildings of Nos 17, 21 and 25 Main Road, as well as offering some relief to the built form whilst maintaining the enclosure seen along the street.

On the whole the character area gives an impression of a green area with trees, hedges and other forms of soft landscaping forming an essential element helping to define its character. The trees and plants are both deciduous and coniferous in variety so whilst their impact is greatest during the summer months, it is nonetheless not lost entirely throughout the winter.

Views into and out of the area are constrained and limited mainly to those along the street with southerly views towards the A422 framed by the built form and mature vegetation of Middleton House and the historic properties opposite. These combine to provide an interesting gateway to the conservation area.

Other views include tantalising glimpses of the open countryside eastwards between the development on that side of the highway and at the far extreme of the area a rare but fuller view of the open countryside is still afforded as you look east from the edge of Middleton House towards the neighbouring settlement of Thenford.
6. Character Areas

Further important views exist into the backlands of many properties on the western side of the highway and offer an interesting insight into the past uses of the site through the outbuildings and working yards which remain.

Overhead wires are present throughout this character area and have a significant impact on the views throughout the streetscape. Street lighting is also more abundant in this area which was until the final decade of the 20th century, the main A422 road linking Brackley to Banbury.

With very few exceptions lighting comes in the form of unprepossessing modern lamp standards which again detract from the character and appearance of the area both during the day and at night as do unsympathetic road markings and highway signage.

**Key characteristics:**
- Linear form of development.
- Small scale vernacular cottages tend to dominate
- Casement windows set tight to the eaves tend to dominate
- Prominent use of ironstone harmonises the built environment regardless of the scale and design of buildings and structures.
- Number of agricultural buildings remaining
- Varied mass and positioning of buildings creates an alternating streetscape.
- Buildings on the whole are modest in scale with two floors of internal accommodation.
- Fine grained built form creates a defined boundary.
- The Lower Green combined with soft landscaping offers a sense of relief from the built environment
- Views tend to be focused along Main Road due to the constraining built form and mature vegetation.

**Key opportunities and threats:**
- Looser development to the east forms the setting to the character area.
- Removal of boundary walls and buildings which reinforce the defined boundary of the area would have a harmful impact on the area's character and special interest.
- Inappropriate development within the setting of the conservation area including that which harms key views within and beyond the area would cause harm.
- An opportunity exists to rationalise street clutter, traffic calming measures, telegraph pole and street lighting where appropriate.
- Where opportunities present themselves to improve building facades particularly through the retention of traditional and the replacement of inappropriate windows and doors they should be taken.
- The loss of outbuildings to the side and rear of properties would cause harm to the significance of the area.

*Figure 55: Overhead wires make a significant impact on the streetscape*
7. Boundary Justification

7.1 Background

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to designate as conservation areas any “areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

It is the quality of the area rather than the individual buildings which should be the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas. It is also important that the concept is not devalued by designating areas lacking any special interest. These considerations have been recognised in the adoption of the current Lower Middleton Conservation Area the boundaries of which are defined as follows.

With few exceptions the southern boundary of the conservation area can be seen to closely follow the rear boundaries of the plots which line the western side of the Main Road. As it moves northwards through the settlement it then follows the rear boundaries of properties on Royal Oak Lane and Braggintons Lane before enveloping the western side of the highway on Rose Hall Lane. The boundary then returns to Main Road where it follows rear boundaries of the properties to the south, west and north of Middle Green, before following the rear boundaries of properties to the north of Main Road to its junction with Royal Oak Lane. The boundary then follows the edge of the highway to Main Road from that point until it reaches the southern extreme of the conservation area where it encloses the whole of the Middleton House site to the east, framing the entrance to the village.
8. Management Plan

8.1 Policy Context
The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its conservation areas.

Conservation area management proposals should be published as part of the process of area designation and review. Their aim is to provide guidance through policy statements to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.

8.2 Threats
The Lower Middleton Conservation Area is an attractive area of the village. However, there are a number of threats and issues which have the potential to detract from its special character. Addressing these now offers the opportunity to enhance the conservation area. Positive conservation management will ensure the ongoing protection of the village’s special character.

The South Northamptonshire Local Plan was adopted in 1997 and resaved in part on 28 September 2007. Middleton Cheney is considered to be one of the more sustainable settlements within the district under the provisions of that plan and therefore susceptible to development pressure.

Such development and the incremental urbanisation and extension of existing properties could, if not handled sensitively, pose a significant threat to the special character and appearance of the Lower Middleton Conservation Area, one which could lead to the erosion of its significance.

The main threat to the area is the cumulative impact of the numerous and often small scale alterations that occur to unlisted buildings within the village. These changes include works such as the replacement of traditional windows, doors, roofing materials and pointing with unsympathetic modern alternatives as well as the removal of traditional features such as boundary walls.

Such alterations to unlisted residential properties are for the most part permitted development and out of the Local Planning Authority’s control with Planning Permission not being required. These changes can result in the erosion of the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Such alterations to unlisted residential properties are for the most part permitted development and out of the Local Planning Authority’s control with Planning Permission not being required. These changes can result in the erosion of the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Figure 57 shows an example where the top windows have been replaced with uPVC windows whilst the bottom retains the original timber frame and glass. The replacement of the traditional sash changes the character and appearance of the building by increasing the frame thickness and creating a reflective surface. This has an overall detrimental effect on the aesthetics of the façade as well as a loss of fabric.

It is not just inappropriate alterations to private buildings which pose a threat, ill-considered alterations to the public realm can also result in the loss of an area of special character and appearance. Shop fronts, signage, street furniture, parked cars and public utilities have a cumulative and sometimes detrimental effect on the quality of the streetscape.

The aim of management proposals is not to prevent changes but to ensure that any such changes are sympathetic to and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Figures 57: Example of both traditional and uPVC windows

Figures 58 and 59: There are various threats to the conservation area including modern kerbing materials and satellite dishes.
8. Management Plan

8.3 Management Proposals

1. Sensitive new development in the conservation area

To be successful, any future development within the conservation area needs to be mindful of the local character as appraised above, while at the same time being distinctly of the 21st century and addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability.

Successful new development in historic areas should:

- Relate well to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land,
- Sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it,
- Respect important views,
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings,
- Use materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings,
- Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of their setting.

(Source: CABE, 2001)

Action 1:

New development must respond sensitively and creatively to the historic environment.

2. Protect surviving historic architectural forms

As a result of the quality of buildings within the conservation area and the limited number of buildings that are subject to statutory protection, there has been some incremental loss of traditional architectural detailing in the conservation area.

The replacement of windows, doors and roofing materials with inappropriate materials and designs is a negative feature that affects both individual buildings and the wider area.

Owners of all significant properties, not just those which are listed, should be encouraged to replace inappropriate materials with appropriate materials. Materials such as uPVC and concrete tiles look out of place in the Lower Middleton Conservation Area and their use is discouraged and removal supported.

The establishment of a list of locally significant buildings and policies for their protection within the forthcoming Local Development Framework would also assist in the protection of the conservation area.

Action 2:

Consider the imposition of Article 4 Directions on buildings of significance across the conservation area to ensure that positive architectural features are retained and any alterations do not harm the character of the conservation area.

Action 2.1:

Establish a list of locally significant buildings and policies for their protection as part of the forthcoming Core Strategy.

3. Boundary walls

Stone walls are a significant element of the character of the Lower Middleton Conservation Area. Any new boundary walls should be constructed of suitable materials, be of an appropriate height and coursing to fit well with existing walls.

Action 3:

Boundary walls which make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area will be retained. New boundary treatments should fit with the character of existing boundary walls.

4. Paving and surfacing

Opportunities should be taken to enhance areas of paving and to retain historic paving materials whenever possible. Careful design and sensitive use of materials will be expected in any future re-surfacing works that take place in Lower Middleton.

Street furniture and signage affect the appearance of a conservation area. Unnecessary clutter will have an adverse effect on the character and should be resisted.

Action 4:

Encourage statutory undertakers to rationalise and remove unnecessary clutter within the conservation area and replace with appropriate solutions.

To work with the highways authorities to avoid the insertion of inappropriate kerbing and footpaths which would have a harmful urbanising affect.

5. Open spaces

Open spaces are a key factor to what makes the Lower Middleton Conservation Area special. Opportunities should be taken to preserve and where possible enhance the character and appearance of these spaces.

Action 5:

Promote the sympathetic management of areas of open space within the conservation area, including verges and banks.
### 6. Renewable Energy Sources

Whilst the Council is supportive of the sustainability agenda it also recognises that many sources of renewable energy and micro generation have the potential to harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. Care therefore needs to be taken to balance the needs of climate change with the preservation of the historic environment.

**Action 6:**
Encourage the sympathetic location of solar panels, wind turbines and other sources of micro generation to inconspicuous roofslopes and building elevations where they will not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

### 7. Satellite Antennas

Satellite and radio antennas are non-traditional features which have the potential to disfigure the appearance of traditional buildings. Care must be taken to ensure that they are located where they will not impact on the significance of heritage assets and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**Action 7:**
Require the location of satellite antennas in inconspicuous sites to prevent harm to the historic character and visual appearance of the area.

### 8. Telegraph Poles, Lamp Standards and Overhead Cables

The visual impact of overhead wires, telegraph poles and lamp standards has the potential to dominate and disfigure the character and appearance of the conservation area. Action is needed to ensure that this situation does not occur.

**Action 8:**
Encourage the undergrounding of cables to reduce the visual pollution caused by overhead lines and their supporting structures within the conservation area.

### 9. Tree Management

Conservation area designation affords protection to trees from unauthorised felling or lopping. The full canopies of large mature trees have a significant and positive impact on the character of the conservation area.

**Action 9:**
Large mature trees should be retained wherever possible in order to preserve the character of the conservation area. Opportunities should be taken as appropriate to plant young trees in order to ensure the continued existence of mature trees in the future.

### 10. Development Affecting the Setting of the Conservation Area

It is important that development around the conservation area does not harm its setting. Any development in or around the Lower Middleton Conservation Area which affects the setting of the conservation area should have regard to views into and out of that area, the setting of positive buildings and the character of the landscape. Appropriate design and materials should be used in development adjacent to the conservation area.

**Action 10:**
The impact of development on the character and appearance of the conservation area should be considered. This applies equally to development outside the conservation area if it is likely to affect the setting of the conservation area.

### 11. Protect Archaeological Remains

Lower Middleton has been inhabited for many centuries and buried evidence of past occupation may survive in the village. Development proposals should take into account the potential for remains of archaeological interest. Professional advice should be sought, and the appropriate assessment undertaken.

**Action 11**
Development which involves below-ground excavation must have regard to the potential for remains of archaeological interest.

### 12. Traffic

The flow of traffic, parking, associated street furniture and signage affects the appearance of a conservation area. Unnecessary clutter does have an adverse effect on the character, as does the heavy flow of traffic through the weight, noise and pollution created.

**Action 12:**
Encourage schemes and works that would aim to assist in reducing the impact of the traffic and associated street furniture within the conservation area, where appropriate.
9. Sources of Further Information

Sources

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Bridges, (1791) The Histories and Antiquities of Northamptonshire Volume 1, Oxford: T. Payne


English Heritage, (2011) Understanding Place: Conservation Area, Designation, Appraisal and Management


Internet Sources


- www.kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/search
- http://middletoncheney.org/
- www.mnrpenvironmentalcharacter.org.uk/
- www.pastscape.org.uk

Further Information

Further information on the local history of Northamptonshire can be found at:

- Northamptonshire Records Office
- Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire Libraries

South Northamptonshire Council have also produced a guidance note on conservation areas which provides further information on what designation means. This can be found at the following address: www.southnorthants.gov.uk/3891.htm

There are also a wide range of national societies devoted to the study and conservation of historic areas and buildings, a few are listed below:

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
www.spab.org.uk

A good source of practical information about looking after buildings of all periods.

Ancient Monuments Society
www.ams.org.uk
Devoted to the study and conservation of ancient monuments, historic building and fine old craftsmanship, with a particular interest in church buildings.

Georgian Group
www.georgiangroup.org.uk
Interested in the study and conservation of 18th- and early 19th-century buildings.

Victorian Society
www.victoriansociety.org.uk
Interested in the appreciation and conservation of 19th and early 20th century buildings of all types.

The following websites are a useful source of local history information:

- http://www.britishhistory.ac.uk/ - digital library of local history resources.

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