Loughton Conservation Area Review

October 2014



www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/conservation-and-archaeology

Foreword



35 years have passed since the Loughton conservation area was established but during that time (and despite considerable changes to the area) the character statement which identifies the special interest of the area has never been reviewed or updated.

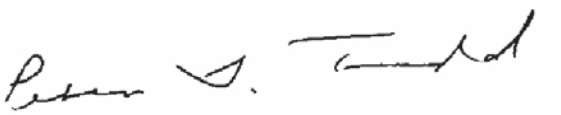
There is much about the old village of Loughton in Milton Keynes which has been successfully preserved and this creates a place which is of unique character and interest which is much loved by residents. There is a strong local feeling that residents want to see these characteristics preserved and sympathetically incorporated within any future and sustainable development of the area.

Loughton Parish Council has been pushing for a review of the conservation areas statement for some time now; but it has eventually become clear that to make this happen, the Parish Council has to take the initiative and commission the work itself.

Milton Keynes Council are the planning authority for this area, and after the consultation exercise and any revisions resulting from it, the Parish Council will be applying to them to adopt this document as the new conservation area review. I sincerely hope they will adopt the statement and apply it to future planning applications within the area. I am grateful to MK Council Conservation and Archaeology for their assistance and co-operation, and for engaging with us in the preparation of this statement.

I am also grateful to local residents and other local stakeholders such as the Parks Trust for engaging with us in this project. I would like to particularly thank Peter Howard for his commitment and expertise in authoring this review.

We hope this will be a valuable guide to prospective developers, MK Council planning and conservation departments and particularly the MK Council Development Control Committee in fully appreciating the special and unique nature of Loughton village in order to ensure that any future development shall enhance and preserve these qualities.



Peter Todd
Chairman, Loughton Parish Council
April 2013

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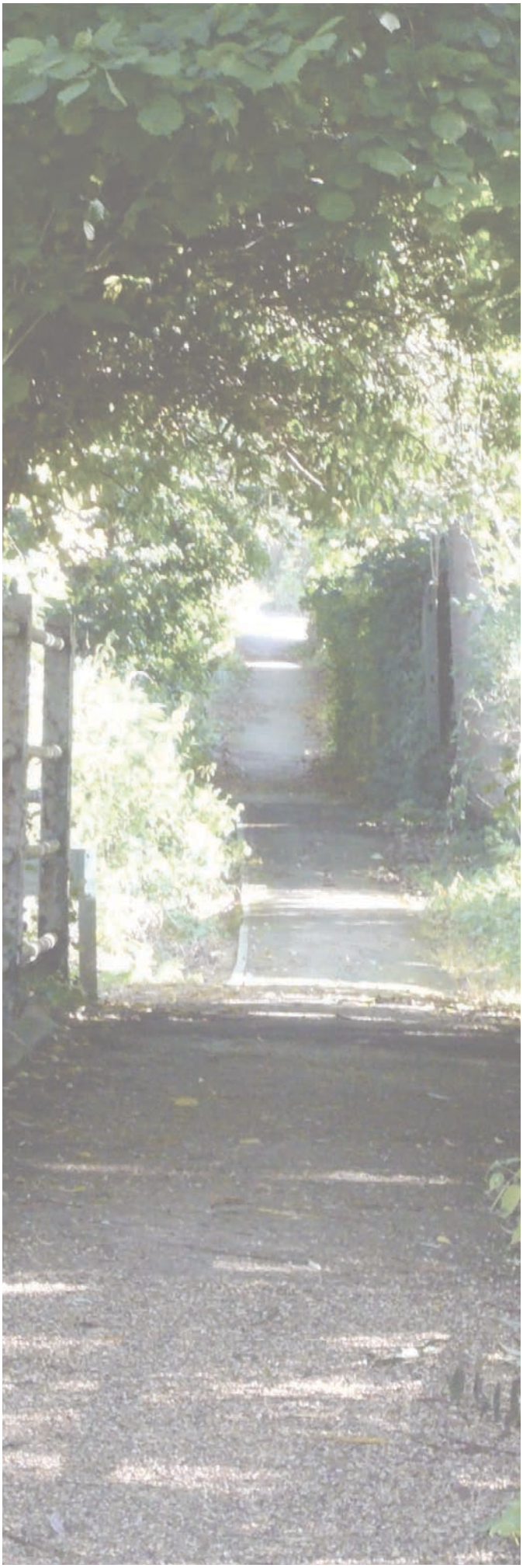
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1. General context

Introduction

1.01 'Conservation areas are places of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance[1].' Loughton was first designated as a conservation area by Buckinghamshire County Council on the 8th. February 1978, eight years after the plan for Milton Keynes was published, as development of the new city was getting under way.

1.02 To protect the character and appearance of conservation areas a character statement is written that identifies and describes those features of special interest or which contribute to local character (section 2 of this document). The one-page conservation statement for Loughton, written in 1977, has not been subsequently reviewed or updated.

1.03 Since then government guidance has stated that conservation area character statements should be reviewed periodically to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. This review document updates the character statement for the Loughton conservation area. Although this review has been undertaken by Loughton Parish Council, the duty to manage conservation areas and process planning applications is the duty of Milton Keynes Council, the local planning authority. The assistance of Milton Keynes' Conservation and Archaeology Team in the preparation of this review is gratefully acknowledged.

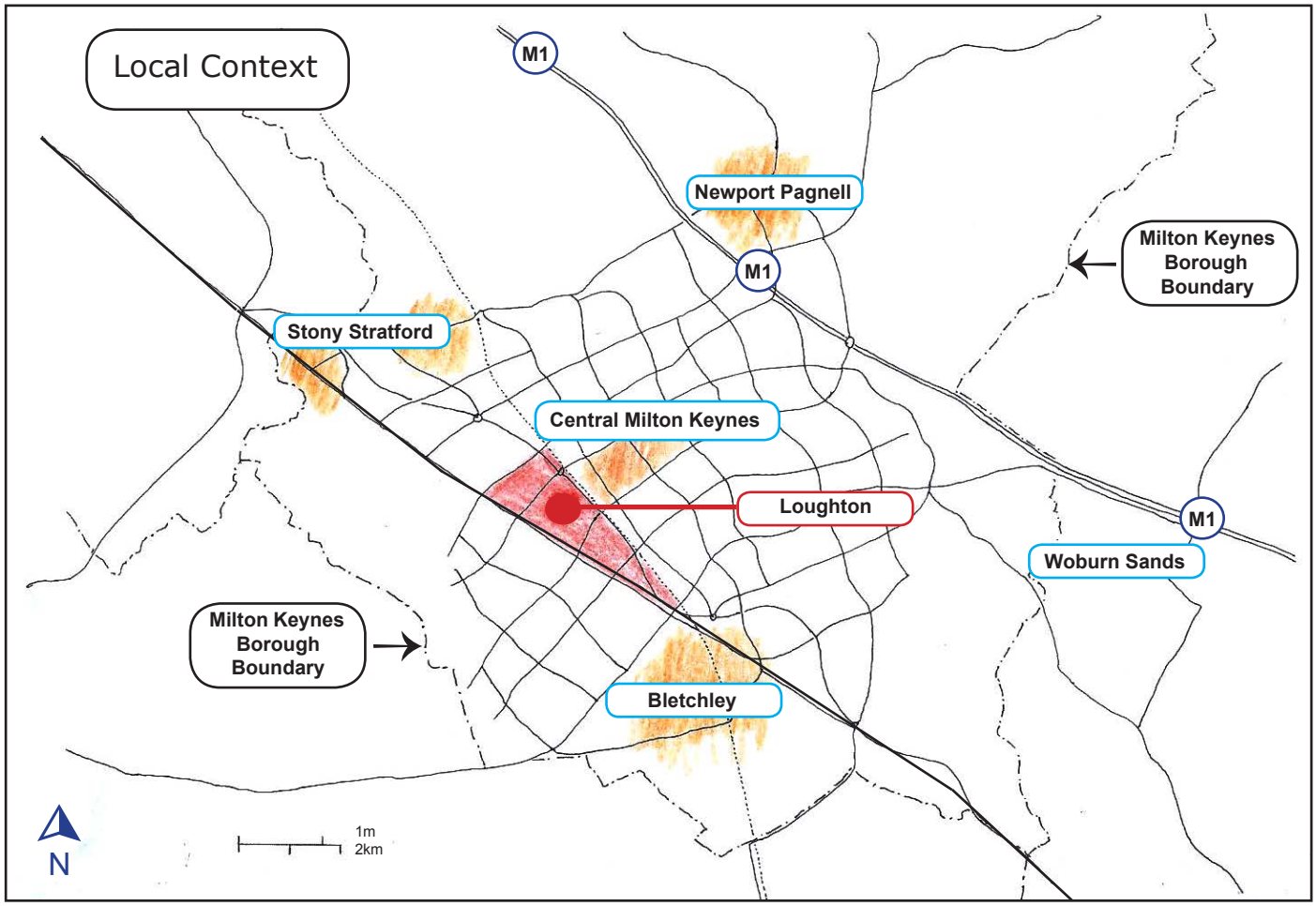
1.04 The 1978 conservation area boundary was drawn around the historic core of the village of Loughton, and pre-dated the development of the surrounding land as part of the new city of Milton Keynes. Given the change in circumstances it is now proposed that this area be extended, as described below.

[1] *The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1090)*. Section 72

Location

1.05 The villages of Great and Little Loughton, separated by Loughton Brook, are situated some 800m north-east of Watling Street, the Roman road that was to become the main trunk road from Birmingham to London.

1.06 Since the construction of Milton Keynes, the village of Loughton now occupies the central part of Loughton Grid Square. This is contained by Portway H5 to the north, Childs Way H6 to the south, Watling Street V4 to the west, and the A5 trunk road to the east. It is part of the area served by Loughton Parish Council, which includes the grid squares of Loughton, Great Holm, West Rooksley, Knowlhill, Elfield Park & the Milton Keynes Bowl, located to the west of Central Milton Keynes.



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Loughton and the new city of Milton Keynes

1.07 Loughton is one of a number of pre-existing towns, villages and hamlets that were integrated into the plan for the new city of Milton Keynes. It is one of eleven conservation areas in the new town designated area, and one of 27 within Milton Keynes Borough boundary.

1.08 The Plan for Milton Keynes[2] recognised that the villages were 'areas of unique character and high amenity,' and that 'special efforts must be made to ensure that they are not swamped by the very large areas of new development, and that they retain their unique character.' The Plan arranged for all the villages to fall within the grid of the main road network in order to allow the old roads to remain serving local functions.

1.09 A plan for Loughton Village, incorporating these ideas, was prepared by Milton Keynes Development Corporation in c.1973[3] and presented to villagers. Although the plan that was finally adopted for the grid square differed from this in a number of ways, it was a useful document in preparing the way for defining the 1978 conservation area, and for showing how the village would be protected from inappropriate new development.

Context

1.10 Loughton Grid Square is now fully developed as part of Milton Keynes. New development surrounding the historic village, carried out in the late 1980s and late 1990s, consists principally of low-density two-storey housing, covering the full range from basic developer housing to high-value individual plots. Associated development includes a first and a middle school, and a sports field and pavilion. Shopping is provided in the nearby district centre in Shenley Church End.

1.11 The structure plan for Loughton grid square was carefully designed by Milton Keynes Development Corporation to protect the historic village from the impact of new development by placing distributor roads serving new development at some distance from the village, and accessing them from the surrounding grid roads. In large measure this successfully protected the historic village from the visual impact of new developments, and with the exception of Bradwell Road, also protected it from through traffic.

1.12 Great Holm is the adjacent grid square to the north. It is largely residential, and falls within Loughton Parish. To the west is Shenley Church End, a grid square within the neighbouring parish that also contains a historic village and conservation area, and a small district centre. It has a long-standing connection with Loughton by a road that passes under Watling Street. Knowlhill grid square to the south falls within Loughton Parish, and contains high-quality employment sites.



1. Distant view of Loughton and Central Milton Keynes from Ashpole Furlong

[2] *The Plan for Milton Keynes.* Milton Keynes Development Corporation, March 1970. Volume 2, pp. 102; 330-332
[3] *Loughton Village, Village Plan and Conservation proposal for the Village of Loughton.* Milton Keynes Development Corporation. Dated, c.1973

1.13 To the east, connected by two footbridges across the A5 trunk road and the West Coast main rail line, both of which run in cuttings, is the westernmost end of Central Milton Keynes. This includes Milton Keynes Central Station – an inter-city stop on the West Coast main line - and Station Square, and a number of office, retail and recreation sites. Childs Way and Ashpole Furlong both afford dramatic views of Loughton village contrasting with modern glass-clad office buildings as in photograph 1.

1.14 Loughton Valley Linear Park threads its way through the grid squares of Knowlhill, Loughton and Great Holm, following the line of Loughton Brook as it flows to the north.

Topography

1.15 Loughton's gently rolling topography is typical of north Buckinghamshire, and consists of a valley formed by Loughton Brook, which wraps around gently rising ground to the north-east.

1.16 The medieval church of All Saints occupies the higher ground, slightly above the 85m contour, which gives its tower special prominence. From here three lanes drop away through the main part of the village giving the impression that Loughton occupies a small hill or bluff. In reality it is on the edge of land that rises gently to the north-east, originally towards Bradwell Common, now Milton Keynes city centre.



2. All Saints Church

1.17 At the foot of the hill, some 12m (40ft) below the church, Loughton Brook skirts around the main village as it follows a northerly route towards New Bradwell, where it joins the River Great Ouse. Once the cause of regular flooding of low-lying parts the village, the brook has now been tamed by the construction upstream of the Teardrop Lakes in Knowlhill, and Furzton Lake beyond them, which are part of a system of balancing lakes designed to manage surface water run-off.

1.18 Little Loughton sits on ground that is little higher than the stream, on its eastern side. Land belonging to the equestrian centre rises gently away from the valley to the south.

Geology

1.19 Loughton Brook and its associated watercourses have alluvial deposits. Adjacent to the brook there are areas of Kellaway Beds, especially to the west of Little Loughton. Beyond the alluvial deposits the ground is Oxford Clay, becoming Boulder Clay on the higher ground, for example to the east of All Saints church. The impact of the local geology on building materials is further explored below in section 2, under *Materials and Building Form.*

Historic development

1.20 Loughton is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, although its name may suggest Saxon origins. In medieval times it was two parishes, one on each side of Loughton Brook, Great Loughton on the right (north-east) and Little Loughton on the left (south-west) side.

1.21 Great Loughton is still the dominant part of the village. Its focus is All Saints church, with its tower, which dates from medieval times, and the rest of the village is loosely arrayed along three lanes that converge at the church. The site of the manor house for Great Loughton is not known.

1.22 Little Loughton now consists of a few buildings around The Green. Little Loughton church no longer survives and its site is not known. The manor house stands to the north of the Green. Although subsequently modified, it dates from the late 15th or early 16th centuries.

1.23 The two parishes were united in 1408 after which the church of All Saints served the whole village. Ownership of the parishes and lands within the parishes in the medieval period was complex, and is fully described in *Victoria History of the Counties of England, Buckinghamshir*e.

1.24 There are extensive medieval earthworks to the south of Leys Road, including the remains of a fishpond and a moated site, which are now a scheduled monument. Their relationship to the two villages is not fully understood.

1.25 Farming had been the central part of village life until it was extinguished with the growth of Milton Keynes, as witnessed by the number of farmhouses. These include Cell Farm and Manor Farm (now Little Loughton Manor) on The Green, an unamed farmhouse on Leys Road (only Stone Barn survives), Brook Farm (now Loughton Manor Equestrian Centre), and both Church Farm and Rectory Farm near the church in Great Loughton. Outlying farms included Loughton Lodge Farm (now the National Badminton Centre), Rectory Farm, and Old Farm – both now demolished.



3. Cell Farm, The Green

1.26 Bradwell Road passes through the village, between Little Loughton and Great Loughton. Before being broken up by the development of Milton Keynes it was part of the lane that started at Shenley Brook End, passing through Shenley Church End, Loughton and Old Bradwell, before ending in New Bradwell at the Newport Pagnell road. The 1885 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map shows a smithy and a post office on this road, with a Baptist Chapel some distance to the south of the village, and a nearby school (now Old School House). By 1900 the post office was housed in a new building near the church. Bradwell Road attracted ribbon development in the late 19th and 20th centuries, extending from Watling Street to beyond the north of the village. Similarly, Church Lane and parts of Leys Road experienced infill building in the same periods.

1.27 Watling Street, the Roman road, is the parish boundary to the south west and became a major artery, attracting a number of hostelries at some distance from the village near where the road from Shenley Brook End to Bradwell crosses it. In 1707 Watling Street was made a Turnpike, was re-paved by Telford in 1808, and in 1922 was designated the A5 trunk road. The busy junction at the Loughton turn was by-passed by the A5 in the 1950s when a fly-over was built. When the M1 opened in 1959 Watling Street fell quiet, and again when the A5 was diverted through Milton Keynes in 1980. Its status is now one of Milton Keynes' grid roads, designated V4.

1.28 The London and Birmingham Railway (L&BR), later part of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), opened in 1838 and passed through a cutting to the north east of Loughton, separating the village from Bradwell Common. This is now the West Coast Main Line, and the proximity of Milton Keynes Central, an inter-city rail station with a frequent and fast service to both Euston and Birmingham, and Milton Keynes city centre beyond, all within walking

distance of Loughton, has made the village a very desirable area. This has created additional development pressure, placing the village's surviving green open spaces at risk of being lost.

1.29 With the coming of the new city of Milton Keynes in the 1970s, farming in Loughton was gradually extinguished as farmland was acquired for development. What was once a farming village has now become a quiet residential enclave where farmhouses have ceased to have any connection with the land, and barns have been turned into houses to serve the new population of Milton Keynes.

Planning framework

1.30 *The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* establishes a duty for councils to identify those places within its administrative area that are of special architectural or historic character or appearance and designate those places as conservation areas.

1.31 *The National Planning Policy Framework* was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2012, and Section 12 deals with *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*. Among many other documents, it has now replaced *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* published in March 2010.

1.32 Councils have a duty to give special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas when determining applications for planning permission. The extent to which development requiring planning permission harms, preserves or enhances the character of a conservation area is given particular weight before decisions are made to refuse or grant planning permission.

1.33 Listed buildings in conservation areas are held to be heritage assets and works of alteration or extension will require an application for listed building consent to be made. Works are authorised only when written consent has been granted by the local planning authority and are executed according to the terms of the consent and any conditions attached.

1.34 The designation of a conservation area provides the council with additional controls over demolition, greater influence over the design of new development, and provides additional protection for trees that are not already subject to a tree preservation order. These controls may be further extended by the introduction of an Article 4(2) direction that removes 'permitted development rights' that allow various alterations to be made without the need to make an application for planning permission. The additional protection that an Article 4(2) direction allows is described in section 3: *Management proposals*. Further advice on the nature or extent of controls in a conservation area and how you may be affected is available from Milton Keynes Council's planning enquiries team.[5]

[4] National Planning Policy Framework. Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2012.

[5] Telephone 01908 252358.
email: planningenquiries@milton-keynes.gov.uk

The existing and proposed conservation areas

1.35 The presence of a designated conservation area potentially protects all the built elements and spaces that lie within it, including features hidden from public view such as walled gardens and summerhouses.

1.36 When Loughton conservation area was first designated in 1978 the village was surrounded by farmland, and this context was taken into consideration in drawing the boundary.

1.37 Since then, with the arrival of Milton Keynes, there have been substantial changes to the village's setting, as described above. The new setting of the village and the conservation area has prompted a re-evaluation of the 'place of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'

1.38 The extended conservation area boundary recognises that Loughton village is now surrounded by new development. The new suburban context suggests that there are three areas retaining their original historic interest and affecting the setting of the village that would now benefit from inclusion in the conservation area (Map 3). These are: *(see overpage)*

a) The linear park and paddock between Lucy Lane and Little Loughton Manor.

This is all part of the linear park, but deserves inclusion both because it contributes to the setting of Little Loughton Manor and Fuller's Barn and because it contributes to the area as a whole.

b) Buildings and land between Leys Road and Whitworth Lane.

The proposed use of Whitworth Lane as the new conservation area boundary draws attention to the fact that this length of Leys Road forms part of the original historic settlement.

c) Loughton Manor Equestrian Centre, including its buildings and land.

In addition to a fine mid-Victorian farmhouse and suite of farm buildings, this also includes a scheduled ancient monument, original hedgerows, field patterns and ridge and furrow. In the context of the development of Milton Keynes this is a remarkable survival, and an important part of the history of Loughton parish, though the scheduled ancient monument has still to be understood in the context of the villages. The open land also affords fine views of Loughton village and its context.

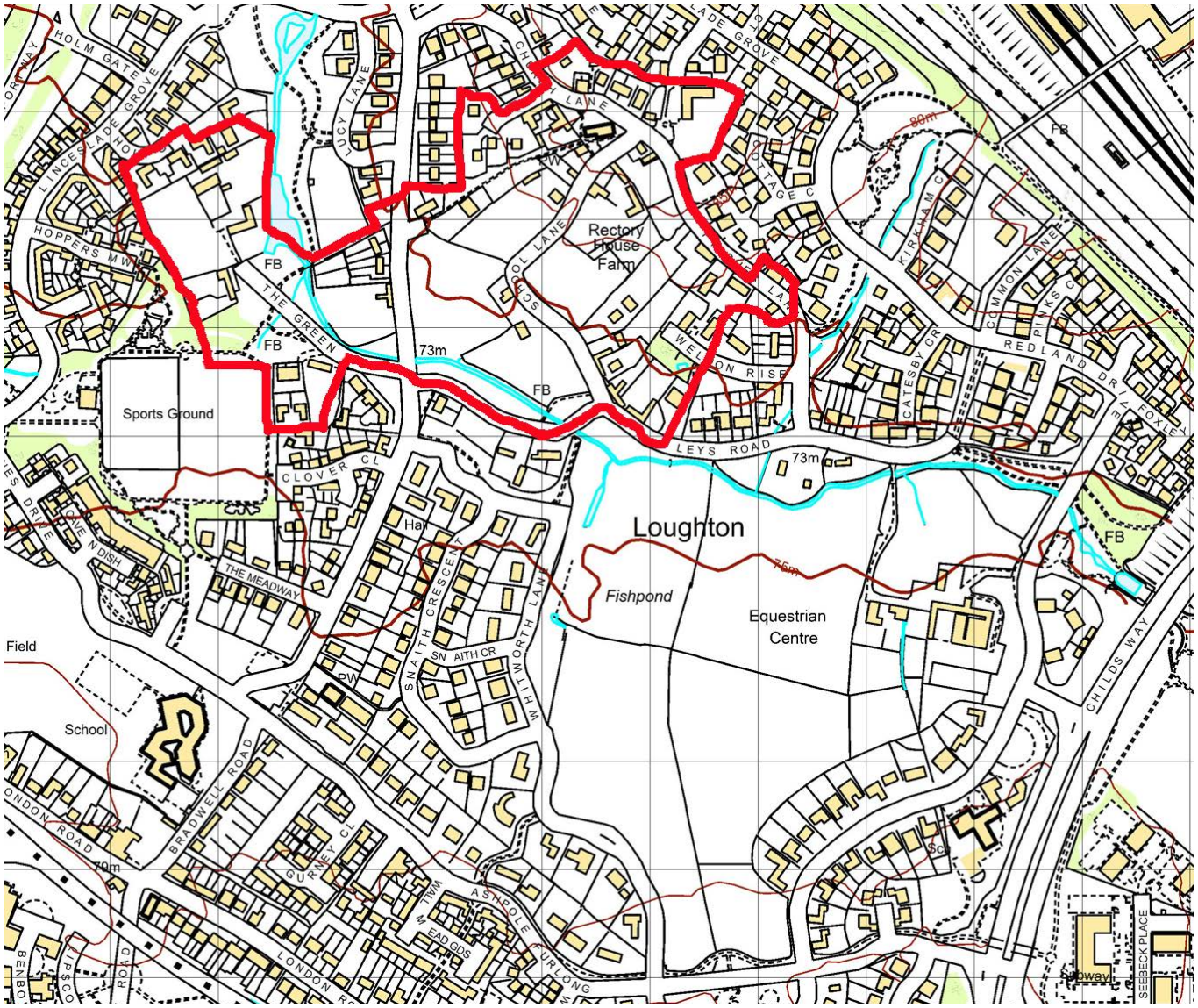


4. Little Loughton Manor seen from Lucy Lane paddock



5. Leys Road, looking east

The existing conservation area



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1.39 These inclusions will help to retain the important sense of openness and the rural quality once imparted by the presence of the surrounding fields and meadows, a key part of the special interest of the Conservation area.

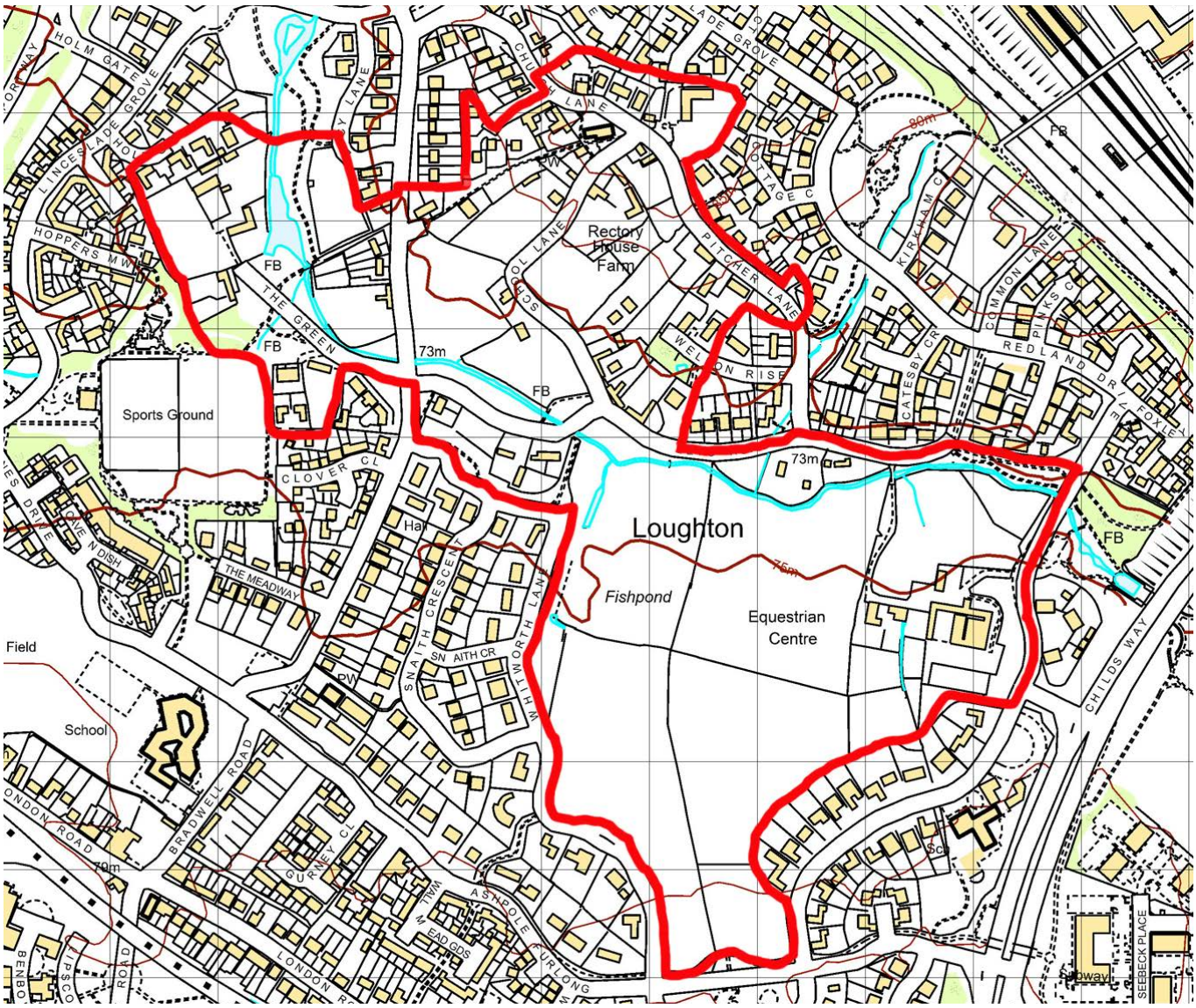


6. Loughton seen across the Equestrian Centre



7. Ridge and furrow in the Equestrian Centre grounds

The extended conservation area



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2. Character Statement

Introduction

2.01 Apart from a small focus around the parish church and around Little Loughton Green, the elements that make up the village of Loughton are loosely scattered, at an extremely low density. In the 1994 edition of The *Buildings of England, Buckinghamshire* Loughton is described as having 'quite a spacious, still rural atmosphere.' Remarkably, despite the development of the new city of Milton Keynes all around, and the presence of an inter-city rail station on its doorstep, it still retains this quality.

Loughton's special interest

2.02 The expanded conservation area's special interest resides principally in the fact that it retains the appearance of a rural farming village which is relatively untouched by modern life, while being surrounded by the new city of Milton Keynes, and only a short walk from a main line rail station and the city centre.

2.03 This special interest results principally from a) the survival of old buildings in their original form, many of which are listed, b) the green spaces between and aorund the buildings, including the equestrain centre's fields, and the views accross the village that these offer and c) the long-established routes within the village, which have been little changed over many years.

2.04 The following headings describe and examine in more detail the main elements that contribute to the expanded conservation area's special architectural or historic interest, and that give it its unique character.

Buildings

2.05 Of the 65 or so buildings in the extended conservation area, of which some 16 are of recent construction, about a quarter are statutorily listed as being of special architectural or historic interest, clearly demonstrating the special architectural or historic significance of the conservation area.

2.06 Those listed grade II* or grade II are as follows:

Listed grade II*

- Church of All Saints, Church Lane
- Little Loughton Manor, The Green

Listed grade II

- Churchyard wall, Church Lane
- Elm House, School Lane
- Rectory Farm, 6 School Lane, including the octagonal garden gazebo.
- Cell Farm, 1 The Green
- Barn to south east of Manor Farm, The Green *(now converted to a house, named Fullers Barn)*
- Manor Farm Cottages, 7 & 8 The Green *(now a single house)*
- Building to north of Manor Farm, The Green
- 2 School Lane
- Beech Cottage, 3 School Lane
- 5 School Lane
- 45 Bradwell Road, and Meadowview 43 Bradwell Road *(now a single house, recently extended)*
- Salisbury House, 3 Leys Road
- Manor Cottage, Leys Road



8. Loughton Manor Equestrian Centre



9. Gate piers and gates to graveyard, Pitcher Lane

2.07 *National Planning Policy Framework* (paragraph 132) states: 'Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear or convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building …. should be exceptional. Substantail harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments…. grade I or grade II* listed buildings …. should be wholly exceptional.'

2.08 A number of other buildings in the extended conservation area are non-designated heritage assets that make a positive contribution to the conservation area, as follows:

- The Old School, School Lane
- Church Farm, 18 Church Lane
- Becket House, Pitcher Lane
- The Old Coach House, Pitcher Lane
- Old Wheatsheaf, 1 Leys Road
- Loughton Manor Euestrian Centre *(formerly Brook Farm),* farmhouse and farm buildings; an important example of a C19th. model farm
- Gates, gate piers and wall to graveyard, facing School Lane
- Gates, gate piers and walls to graveyard, facing Pitcher Lane
- Victorian bridge on Leys Road
- Victorian Bridge from Leys Road to Loughton Manor Equestrian Centre

2.09 It should be noted that there are a number of non-designated heritage assets associated with the village, but outside the conservation area, including:

- Baptist Chapel, Bradwell Road
- Memorial Cottages, and Victorian post box
- 35, 37, 39 and 41 London Road



10. Baptist Chapel, Bradwell Road



11. Memorial Cottages, London Road



12. Meadowview, Bradwell Road

Materials and Building Form

2.10 There is a great variety of building materials, construction and built form in Loughton. Nevertheless, a few general trends can be noted.

2.11 There are no surviving timber frame buildings where the timber frame is expressed externally. Although Little Loughton Manor was constructed of a timber frame in the late 15th or early 16th century it was later clad in stone. Other older buildings are generally of stone construction, using a random coursed local limestone with lime mortar. The Victoria County History refers to two local stone quarries, without giving locations. Roofs of older buildings are usually steeply pitched (in the order of 50 degrees or more) and are thatched, or tiled with red clay plain tiles, possibly replacing earlier thatch. Windows are often side-hung timber casements, with timber lintels.

2.12 Most houses of this period in Loughton were of one or two storeys, sometimes with attics and small dormer windows in the steep roofs; generally they had a wide front and were one room deep with interconnecting rooms, sometimes extended with a single storey wing either at the rear or at the side.

2.13 From the early 19th century local brick became a more popular building material. There was a brick pit at Coldharbour Farm where the National Bowl now stands, about 2km south west of Loughton, and doubtless other smaller unrecorded pits. Local bricks are orange/red in colour and were bedded in lime mortar, laid in Flemish bond. There are examples of diaper patterning. Roofs are increasingly of a shallower pitch (in the order of 30 degrees) and when shallow are generally covered in Welsh slate, sometimes replaced in recent years with concrete tiles to the detriment of the character of the Conservation



13. Manor Farm Cottages, The Green



14. 2 School Lane



15. Beech Cottage, School Lane

area. Windows are often timber vertical sliding sash windows, with segmental brick or cut stone lintels. Loughton Manor Equestrian Centre and its farm buildings is a good example of this period.

2.14 Most roofs in Loughton have gable ends, and hipped roofs are unusual; chimneys, some substantial, are characteristic of all older houses.

2.15 While larger brick-built houses were detached and continued to be just one room deep, smaller houses were sometimes semi-detached and deeper in plan, echoing the urban form of Wolverton and New Bradwell, for example the terrace of brick cottages on The Green.

2.16 Regrettably a number of buildings have recently been painted white, for example Cell Farm (over stone), Becket House (over brick) and Salisbury House (over roughcast on brick). This is to be discouraged.

2.17 There is a small number of recently constructed or modified buildings that pay no regard to their setting and to the traditions of the village, starting with the mid 20th century bungalows in Church Lane and Leys Road, and continuing to more recent years. These developments, although completed before the designation of the conservation area, now regrettably detract from its character rather than enhancing it, and work of this sort should be avoided in future.

2.18 Routes and open spaces

The routes and open spaces of the expanded conservation area make a significant contribution to its unique character, and are therefore described in some detail.



16. Victorian farmworkers' cottages on The Green



17. Bungalows in Church Lane



18. Footpath leaving The Green

Footpaths

2.19 There are three important public footpaths, each with a different character, within the conservation area. They provide a pleasant traffic-free option for moving around the village on foot. They also enhance the attractive character of the conservation area by opening up unexpected views and experiences.

a) **Footpath from The Green to All Saints churchyard**

This footpath extends the system of footpaths serving Loughton grid square as it passes through the conservation area. Surfaced mainly in gravel chippings, it first crosses the open space of The Green, crosses Bradwell Road, and culminates in views of the church tower.

b) **Footpath from Pitcher Lane to School Lane**

A surfaced path that runs gently downhill from Pitcher Lane, passing the allotments, and later affording views over a paddock. The character of this path is likely to change considerably after the nearby construction of three new houses for which planning approval was granted in 2010. A tall hedge of *Cupressus x leylandii* screens the site from the footpath, where some sort of screen planting is essential.

c) **Footpath from School Lane to Bradwell Road**

This is a pleasant grass path that follows the south side of a hedge, skirting a meadow. To the north there is a brief glimpse of Elm House through a field gate, but the main view is south over the meadow, towards mature willow trees along Loughton Brook, low-lying thatched cottages *(now Meadowview),* and a discordant modern bus shelter.



19. Footpath approaching All Saints church



20. Cottage by All Saints church



21. Footpaths near Elm House



22. Elm House

Lanes

2.20 Three lanes – Church Lane, School Lane and Pitcher Lane - meet at All Saints church, whose churchyard rises above them behind stone retaining walls. This is the highest point in the village.

2.21 These are all narrow 'sunken' lanes, formed through use and erosion over many years, which pedestrians, cyclists and people on horseback now share with motor vehicles. They are single track, allowing only one vehicle in each direction, and are incapable of taking increased traffic. In places the earth banks support overgrown hedges rising up on each side, giving a remarkably private and rural feeling, especially when the hedges arch over the lane and meet in the middle.



23. School Lane

The lack of urbanising street furniture, kerb edgings, road markings, and the minimal street lighting all contribute to a rural quality that should be perpetuated if the character of the conservation area is to be safeguarded. These lanes make a significant contribution to the rural quality of Loughton, and their fragile nature is only preserved by keeping their use low-key.

2.23 Church Lane

This approaches the church from the north and is the most suburban in nature. Several red brick cottages were built on high ground to the east of the lane in the 19th century, and again more recently. A number of mid-20th century bungalows have resulted in the lane having its hedges and banks removed in places, resulting in an unfortunate opening up. Views of the church and its newly constructed facilities are masked by yew trees growing in the churchyard, which sits above a listed dry stone retaining wall, while Church Farm – with a prominent pear tree - is set down from the road behind a brick garden wall beside the church. Its remaining barn has been heavily rebuilt in a 'rustic' style. Opposite there is a red E II R post box, outside the old Post Office.

2.24 School Lane

This runs below the south side of the church which, with its prominent tower, porch and three Perpendicular windows, is its best side. The graveyard is glimpsed on the other side of the lane. After the church the lane is characterised by a number of attractive buildings, including Beech Cottage, which takes its name from a significant mature beech tree, Rectory Farm whose gable towers above the lane, and Elm House which is set back somewhat. Nearby are the gates and gate piers to the graveyard. Gardens and tall hedges flank the lane until it arrives at Old School House, where it turns through 90 degrees to head south towards Leys Road.

2.25 Pitcher Lane

Once past Becket house this is the most overgrown and rural of the three lanes. It first skirts the graveyard with its gates and gate piers and weeping ash tree, and then the allotments on the west side, before diving into a section with tall field hedges on banks, interrupted by the occasional house. It eventually leaves the conservation area when it opens up by some more modern houses.

2.26 Whitworth Lane was created in imitation of country lanes as part of the development of Loughton Grid Square, and is lined on one side with large scale individual houses built from the late 1980s to 1995. Although not in itself of historic value, Whitworth Lane forms the boundary of the extended conservation area, and affords fine views over the remaining original fields and hedges that now constitute the equestrian centre, as well as views towards the village across these fields.



25. Rectory Farm looking up School Lane



26. Elm House seen from School Lane



24. Rectory Farm looking down School Lane



27. View of Loughton from Whitworth Lane

Roads

2.27 Bradwell Road

This is the major local road, and a bus route, leading through the village on its way to Bradwell. Its route between the old Little Loughton and Great Loughton causes it to avoid the heart of either part of the village, although it attracted some commercial activities, such as a post office and smithy shown on early Ordnance Survey maps, and the present Wood Yard selling fence posts etc. Heading north, it enters the conservation area where it crosses Loughton Brook. This place is marked by mature willow trees by the brook, with a clump of mature oaks alongside, and then a delightful view of the church tower across a meadow where, until the hedge was allowed to grow, Elm House could also be seen.



28. Bradwell Road

2.28 It is a shame that a prominent pair of signs saying 'no parking on footway' and two modern steel bus shelters detract from the rural ambiance.

2.29 Leys Road

This used at one time to lead onto Bradwell Common, but with the construction of Milton Keynes city centre it was severed in the village, making it a dead-end for traffic. Heading east from Bradwell Road it first runs parallel with Loughton Brook past a wide grass verge and a line of willows, before crossing the brook over a narrow Victorian brick bridge. A new timber bridge has here been provided so pedestrians no longer need to share the vehicular bridge.



29. Leys Road looking west



30. Victorian bridge on Leys Road

2.30 Opposite the bridge there is a distinctive row of three wide white-painted houses: no. 2 School Lane, The Wheatsheaf (formerly an Alehouse, and more recently a shop and house, before reverting to entirely residential use), and Salisbury House with its newly timber-clad and remodelled barn, and beyond, a newly rebuilt brick garden wall. Salisbury House and the mid C20th. bungalows beyond it have an open south-facing view across Leys

Road over the grounds of Loughton Manor Equestrian Centre, including the site of a scheduled ancient monument. Further on behind a hedge Manor Cottage stands beside Loughton Brook. Beyond it the group of red brick Victorian farm buildings making up the equestrian centre can be seen across a field, accessed by a bridge and a driveway. At this point pedestrians can join the Loughton Valley linear park and head east into Knowlhill.

Open spaces

2.31 Loughton has an abundance of open spaces that contribute to its rural character. The generous amount of green open space between buildings makes a significant contribution to the unique character of the village, and is an integral part of the setting for the many listed buildings in the village.

2.32 Some of these open spaces are privately owned or in private use, including the large gardens of Manor Farm, Elm House, Rectory Farm (with its gazebo), Meadowview, and the new house next to the Old School House. In addition to the equestrian centre, there are also a number of paddocks.

2.33 The meadow opposite Meadowview, although privately owned, is crossed by a public footpath and contributes greatly to the view from Bradwell Road and the sense of rural openness.

2.34 The extensive grounds of the equestrian centre, owned by The Parks Trust, add immeasurably to the impression of a rural setting for the village even though they are not publicly accessible. This is both as a result of the open views afforded from the village, and also the views of the village from Whitworth Lane. The preservation of this stretch of largely untouched original countryside is a valuable visual asset to the conservation area and its history.



31. Salisbury House, Leys Road



32. Meadow opposite Meadowview



33. Meadowview glimpsed across meadow

2.35 The more northerly part, containing earthworks left from Little Loughton, is scheduled under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1971*, as of national importance. It is briefly summarised thus: *Moated site, fishpond and associated earthworks 150m west of Loughton Manor*

2.36 The churchyard, the graveyard and the allotments all have some degree of public access, are visible from the adjacent lanes, and contribute to the sense of an established village community.

2.37 The Green, part of the original Little Loughton, is the conservation area's major publicly accessible space. It is both historically important, and also provides the setting for a number of listed buildings. This is a dead-end to traffic, but is crossed by footpaths which have recently been formalised with the laying of gravel chippings, the construction of a timber bridge over a ditch, and a circular wooden seat around a tree. The road would have benefitted from a similar gravel treatment. There is a glimpsed view to the south of the Sports Ground, and a connection across Loughton Brook into the Loughton Valley linear park, which The Green forms part of.

2.38 There are fine views of Manor Farm Cottages, Cell Farm, and its cottages across The Green. Stone-built Manor Farm Cottages with its steep thatched roof must be one of Loughton's pleasantest sights. It is a shame that Little Loughton Manor, its remaining outbuilding, and Fuller's Barn – all stone-built and listed – are not more visible from The Green. This is partly a result of the landscaped garden in front of Fuller's Barn, a consequence of it becoming a residential property.



34. View over scheduled ancient monument



35. The Green, general view



36. Little Loughton Manor, no longer visible from The Green

Landscape and Trees

2.39 The village of Loughton and its conservation area have an established landscape that has evolved and been nurtured over a great many years, as a contrast to the rest of Milton Keynes whose magnificent landscape is recent and was designed. This imparts a feeling of continuous habitation, and is characterised by private gardens, paddocks meadows and fields, mature hedges, and a variety of fine trees.

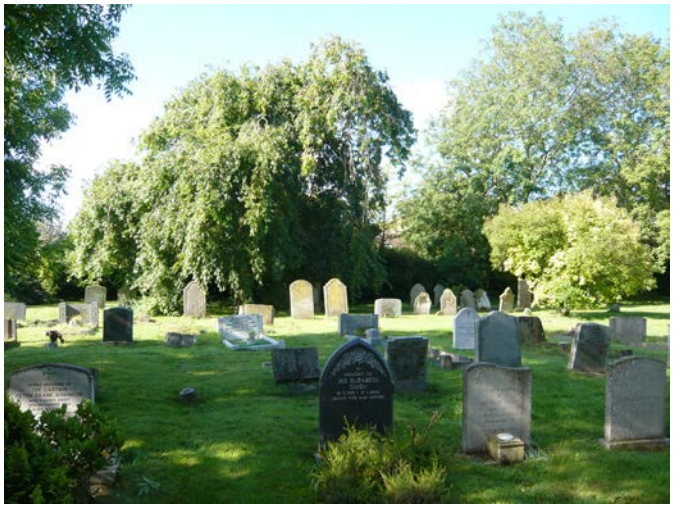
2.40 Three typical examples of longstanding and traditional tree planting are a) the presence of yews in the churchyard, b) the weeping ash in the graveyard, c) the beech trees planted in the grounds of the Victorian rectory, now Becket House.

2.41 Although a number of individual trees and groups of trees have Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), it is the landscape as a whole, along with the TPO trees, that complements and enhances the conservation area, as it changes with the seasons.

2.42 Milton Keynes Council has recognised the importance of many trees across its area by protecting them with TPOs. A TPO makes it an offence to cut down, lop, top, uproot, wilfully damage or destroy a tree without first obtaining permission from the Council. It can apply either to a single tree or a group



37. Beech tree by Beech Cottage



38. Graveyard and weeping ash

3. Management proposals

Introduction

3.01 Section 72 of the Planning *(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* sets out the council's duty in respect of conservation areas stating that 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.' It is therefore not only a question of ensuring that the existing historic character of the conservation area is preserved but also that any new development makes a positive contribution to it.

3.02 Reaffirming the conservation area's character presents an opportunity to look back at the success of the existing controls and the manner in which they have been implemented.

3.03 This draft management plan identifies other ways in which the planning authority's duty can be implemented more effectively including the use of an Article 4(2) Direction (see below).

3.04 The principles and advice contained in this management plan accord with the broad advice contained within the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2012 and *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* published by English Heritage in 2011, and now under review in the light of the NPPF.

Planning Guidance

3.05 *The National Planning Policy Framework,* paragraph 128, says 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.'

3.06 It goes on to say 'Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.'.

Demolitions

3.07 Demolition of buildings which contribute to the character and appearance of the area will not normally be permitted in the conservation area. *National Planning Policy Framework*, paragraph 133, says 'Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent,…' It goes on to give a number of conditions where this may not be the case.

New Development

3.08 In the Loughton conservation area there have been several new developments since designation, including Holt Grove behind Little Loughton Manor, two houses in Clover Close behind The Green, a group of houses in All Saints view, part of Weldon Rise, and substantial individual new houses in the grounds of The Old School, Rectory Farm, and most recently Elm House. In addition a number of houses have been extended, sometimes substantially, for example no.4 School Lane. There is also an extant planning approval for three new houses beyond Weldon Rise.

3.09 All this means that the amount of historic open space in the village is being reduced, and the number of private motor cars is increasing. On-street parking, pressure for improvements to raods, and physical damage can all occur to the detriment of the prevailing rural character that currently sets the village apart from the surrounding new town housing areas.

3.10 The *Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan* prepared by Loughton Parish Council is emerging, and when it is adopted its policies will carry full weight in dermining planning applications. The draft version states 'there shall be no additional dwellings permitted for development within the conservation area.' This acknowledges the importance of the remaining private gardens, paddocks, and other open spaces in contributing to the special character of the conservation area, and the need to 'prevent further traffic in the roads (especially the sunken lanes of Church Lane, Pitcher Lane and School Lane) which are unsuitable as major thoroughfares.'

3.11 New development proposed in the conservation area should respect the scale, appearance, form, density, mix and layout of the historic patterns of development. Plan form, elevational treatment and materials should all complement the historic and architectural character of the conservation area.

3.12 The presence of existing buildings and details that contradict or undermine the historic character or appearance of the conservation area will not be deemed grounds for similar development. Where inappropriate development has been permitted in the past every effort should be made to avoid repetition.

Change of Use

3.13 Changes of use to a building or land where the new use would harm the character or appearance of the conservation area should not normally be permitted.

Alterations to buildings

3.14 A large proportion of the buildings in the conservation area are statutorily listed as being of special architectural or historic interest. Other buildings that are not of special merit in the national context can still make an important contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Few of the older buildings in the conservation area fail to make a positive contribution to the village's character or appearance. 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.' *National Planning Policy Framework*, paragraph 135. As the Conservation area is itself a designated heritage asset, all planning applications within it will be considered as affecting a designated heritage asset.

3.15 Proposals to alter buildings in ways that diminish their special character or appearance pose the greatest threat to the integrity of the conservation area. In line with national and local policy there should be a presumption against permitting alterations to buildings that adversely affect their individual character or appearance, or that of the conservation area. There are no controls over much of these unless a building is listed, hence the recommendation that an Article 4(2) direction be introduced.

Article 4(2) Direction

3.16 An Article 4(2) Direction can be made under the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.* The aim of an Article 4(2) Direction is to encourage the retention of high quality architectural features and to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the built heritage, by controlling small scale works that may be of little concern elsewhere but that would have considerable impact in an area of special architectural and historic interest.

3.17 The designation of a Conservation Area only goes some way towards protecting the integrity of buildings and their character. Under the *Town and Country Planning Act (General Permitted Development) Order 1995*, permitted development rights enable property owners within a conservation area to undertake small-scale extensions and/or alterations without the need for planning permission, and these rights have recently been extended under a relaxation of the legislation. Where these rights are unchecked, they can soon erode the special interest of the conservation area.

3.18 It is therefore proposed that it would be appropriate for Milton Keynes Council to introduce additional controls by issuing an article 4(2) direction covering Loughton conservation area. It is felt that householders fortunate enough to live in an attractive conservation area. It is felt that householders fortunate enough to live in an attractive conservation are should have no problem in submitting their proposals for approval.

Repair and Maintenance

3.19 Householders are advised to seek advice on materials, techniques and finishes appropriate to the repair and maintenance of historic buildings within the conservation area. The primary source of local advice should be Milton Keynes Council's Conservation and Archaeology Team; secondary sources of general advice include the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and English Heritage.

Buildings at Risk

3.20 Until recently Elm House was in decline; fortunately it has now been returned to good condition.

3.21 Rectory Farm appears to be suffering some neglect, with ivy being allowed to grow up walls, and blocked gutters leading to potential problems. The coach house is also in poor condition.

3.22 The Victorian bridge to the Equestrian Centre has brickwork missing from its parapet.

3.23 The cemetery gates, piers and walls all need attention.



39. Rectory Farm coach house



40. Victorian bridge to Equestrian Centre



41. Cemetery gates and piers to School Lane

The Street Scene

3.24 Milton Keynes Council will pay special attention to the street scene and its contribution to the character and appearance of the area, and also to the preservation or enhancement of any historic items or features that it contains.

3.25 There is no doubt that further development in the conservation area will put unacceptable pressure on the sunken lanes, which are already beginning to suffer through increased vehicular traffic.

3.26 In the Loughton conservation area there is little survival of historic surfaces or street furniture. Special attention will be given to ensuring new features are avoided where they affect the historic character and appearance of the conservation area. This includes schemes for surface treatments, new kerbs, traffic signs, white lining etc.

3.27 Examples of poor recent decisions are the standard yellow bollard at the footpath leading off Pitcher Lane, and the galvanised steel railings at its other end: in both cases oak posts would have been more sympathetic and appropriate. Although salt boxes can be useful, their colour and siting should be given more careful consideration. Reference has already been made to the intrusive 'no parking on footway' signs on Bradwell Road. The illuminated road warning signs (road narrows, sharp bend etc) in School Lane and Pitcher Lane are inappropriate, unnecessary and out of keeping with the area.

3.28 Care should be taken to ensure that vision splays for new vehicle entrances do not damage the sense of enclosure enjoyed by the lanes, as has already happened in a number of cases. Highway schemes, including traffic calming measures, shall have regard to the council's duty to preserve or enhance the special historic character or appearance of the conservation area. A lower speed limit than 30mph would be appropriate in the narrow lanes.

3.29 The council will also place an emphasis on the need to retain and keep in good repair private boundary treatments, and avoid the loss of front gardens for hard standing for motor vehicles.



42. Yellow bollard on Pitcher Lane footpath



43. Salt box on Leys Road

Trees

3.30 Trees and hedgerows make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the clear preference will be for their retention and maintenance (for example by the removal of ivy from tree trunks), and for continued renewal through the maintenance of existing hedgerows, and the planting of new hedgerows and trees where appropriate, using indigenous species. The use of Cupressus leylandii, for example, has no historic justification within a traditional village setting.

3.31 All trees in conservation areas that have a diameter of more than 7.5cm (3ins) measured 1.5m (5ft) above ground level are afforded similar protection to those covered by tree preservation orders (TPOs). It is not therefore considered necessary to propose other TPOs in the conservation area.



44. Oak tree in grounds of Equestrian Centre

4. Consultation

Before submitting this draft conservation area review for adoption by Milton Keynes Council, the Parish Council consulted the following:

1) All residents, property owners and tenants within the proposed enlarged conservation area – including those roads such as Whitworth Lane bordering the new extended area although just outside it.
2) English Heritage SE Region
3) MP for Loughton
4) Milton Keynes Council Local Members for Loughton
5) Development Control Committee Members
6) Strategic Directors and relevant Heads of Services
7) Libraries
8) Loughton Parish Council All Councillors
9) Adjacent Parish Councils
   Shenley Church End
   Abbey Hill
   Bradwell
   Central Milton Keynes
   Campbell Park
   Woughton
   Shenley Brook End
10) All Saint's Church Loughton, Churchwardens
11) Loughton Baptist Church
12) The Parks Trust
13) SaferMK, Community Safety Manager
14) MK Heritage Association

This document was published on the Parish Council website so that local residents outside the Conservation area but near to it were included in the consultation.

Responses and reactions

A statement of consultation, and summary of the responses, was published by the Parish Council in December 2013

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