

Draft Character Statement

The character statement in effect sets out the justification for the designation of the proposed conservation area. It distils the appraisal into a series of headings designed to summarise the special characteristics of Little Brickhill. Development proposals, conservation area management planning and Local Authority Planning decisions should take into account the following criteria supported by the information set out in the preceding village appraisal. The proposed conservation area is shown in Appendix A: Figure A1.

Location

Little Brickhill's location on the Greensand ridge provides significant views out across open countryside, particularly to Milton Keynes in the north and Aspley Woods to the north east. The positions of The Grange, Tantallon and High Acres on the ridge mark the buildings out as important local landmarks. The Greensand stone found in the area is used as a distinctive building material in the village and hence contributes to a local sense of place. Historically Little Brickhill has been associated with the A5 Watling Street. The association with the road has been reduced following the opening of the bypass. The relative peace that the village now enjoys should be respected in future development proposals.

Historic Development

Little Brickhill is located on the A5 and as a result the village's fortunes have reflected to a significant degree those of the road. The linear arrangement of the village along the line of the A5 is indicative of Watling Street's importance to the village's economy. Although no longer the principle line of Watling Street the broad width of the old road and the linear arrangement of the settlement is a key element of Little Brickhill's character and a significant reminder of the village's origins.

Historic Buildings

The village's listed historic buildings are principally located at two points, firstly around the Woburn Road / Great Brickhill Lane Junction and secondly, further to the west around The Old Green Man. However, a series of other buildings of historic significance that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, are spread fairly evenly from the Parish church to The Grange. Building use is now mostly domestic, a series of shops and inns having now been lost. The school has also closed but is used as the community centre. Those historic buildings that remain in non-domestic use add, in combination, considerably to the daytime vitality and sense of community evident in the settlement. These include

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|-------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. St Mary Magdalen's Church | Grade II | 5. The Glen Day Nursery | Unlisted |
| 2. The Old Green Man Public House | Grade II | 6. Little Brickhill Stores | Unlisted |
| 3. The Old Barns at Church Farm | Unlisted | 7. The Community Centre (Old School) | Unlisted |
| 4. The Whitehouse Bed and Breakfast | Unlisted | | |

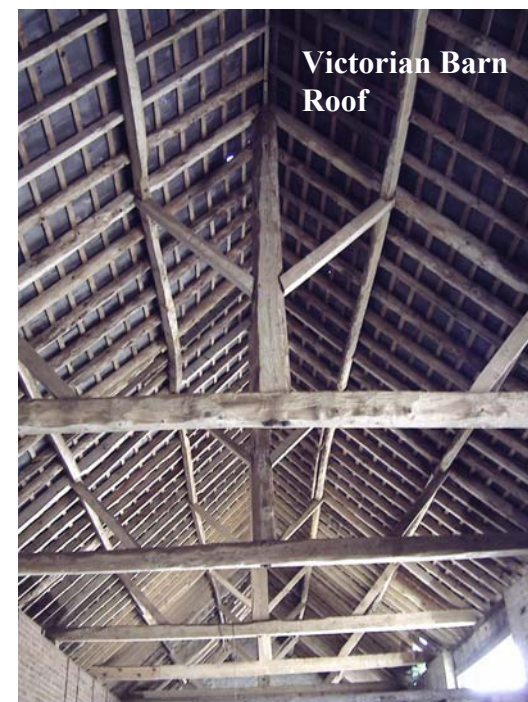
Two other significant historic buildings in non-domestic use that contribute to village character are the Methodist Chapel on Great Brickhill Lane and the disused barn north of Warren Farm Cottages. The village's significant historic buildings of all types are illustrated in Appendix A, Figure 2. Efforts to preserve and enhance the conservation area should take particular account of the buildings shown in Figure A2.

The historic buildings in the village tend to be of Georgian or Victorian origin. However, some buildings such as Warren Farm have been refaced and hence disguise older buildings. Careful analysis may be required before potentially harmful alterations are permitted to any pre C20th historic building in the proposed conservation area.

Building Materials and Local Details

Vernacular building methods and materials are evident in the village. Early bricks, slates and tiles are also evident, the local Greensand stone is a key local material that should be retained wherever possible. A number of historic doors and windows remain on both listed and unlisted buildings. Intriguingly, an old clay pit survives within the village (Area 1). Modern methods and materials have inevitably infiltrated the historic environment to its detriment and this process should be discouraged. Regrettably no historic paving or road materials were evident in the village but the possibility of survival beneath modern surfacing should be taken into account. No historic road signs or mileposts were noted, however, the refurbished pump is a valuable and characterful piece of historic street furniture.

The vernacular materials and surviving early or original doors, windows etc that do survive add to the sense of history and individuality of place that is evident in the village. Modern standard materials and items will undermine this quality if unchecked. A basic schedule of materials is included in Appendix C.



Hedges Trees and Green Spaces

Trees make a significant contribution to the western end of the village and its approaches in particular. Important trees are also located along the eastern boundary of The Stables and The Old Rectory and play an important part in establishing the rural nature of Woburn Road and the approach to the village along Great Brickhill Lane. The lime trees and other large trees visible from the footpath that runs between The Clockhouse and Tantallon are also significant. Throughout the proposed conservation area there are well kept gardens and green spaces. Important green spaces accessible to the public include the playing fields and the gardens of The George and The Old Green Man, which arguably are not being used to their full potential. The contribution made by trees, hedges, gardens and publicly accessible green spaces should be preserved and enhanced wherever possible.

Inter-relationship of Spaces

As the division of the village into three for the appraisal suggests, there are different character areas along the length of Watling Street as it passes through the village. There is the very green, well-treed area to the west; the village core with a series of important buildings along the road frontage and, finally the rather bleaker eastern end. The village is not all about the linear relationships however; the circular routes identified in the appraisal lend considerable interest to the village and indeed are a characterful feature of it. The link through from Great Brickhill Lane to Watling Street is quite hidden and fine grain, the link from the playing fields to the former Woburn Road combines openness with the enclosure of the hedges and trees found on Woburn Road whilst the footpath link across the fields to the north is very much about views and open spaces. In combination with these circular links are intriguing spaces off the main road; these include the yard at George Farm and the access road between Brannams and North Cottage to the houses beyond. The quality of these inter-relationships is varied but, in combination, they add significant interest and character to the village.

Setting and Relationship with Surrounding Countryside

Little Brickhill's principal relationship is with the road that runs through it. The surrounding countryside, although still very much in evidence and in places pushing close to the heart of the village, has a sense of being divorced from it. Church Farm and George Farm are strong counters to this assertion as their continuing presence creates an authentic historic inter-relationship between the village and countryside. Conversely, however, the sense of detachment is exacerbated to the north by the proximity and sheer scale of the A5 bypass. It is perhaps the village's many trees echoing the wooded hinterland that forms the strongest link between the character of the village and surrounding landscape. The village is set in a locally designated area of attractive landscape. The local tree preservation orders, the extent of the 'Area of Attractive Landscape' designation and the general tree cover are shown in Appendix A: figure A3a and A3b and Appendix B: Local Plan Policies. Care should be taken to ensure that the village's existing relationship with its surroundings is not undermined further and is wherever possible strengthened.

Interruptions to Historic Form

In many ways the village pattern is intact, it is still certainly discernible. The lack of traditional through traffic on the former Watling Street actually allows the village to be enjoyed more easily. However the A5, now to the north, intrudes still with, on some occasions, significant amounts of road traffic noise. The new bypass has also broken the historic link with Woburn along the former Woburn Road which now ends in an undistinguished cul-de-sac. The new way into the village from the north is via the rather sterile new road provisions leading from the A5. Other encroachments include the imposed modern cul-de-sac development of Brickhill Manor Court, the houses between George Farm and Home Farm and the Wyness Avenue development, not least because they are contrary to the generally linear nature of the village. The only areas of real detriment to the character of the proposed conservation area are the garage and surrounding land, the telephone mast and the approach to the roundabout, all of which are located at the eastern end of the village.

Research and Evaluation

Although there has been a detailed appraisal of the village in this document it is acknowledged that information is only partial. There are important buildings and spaces that form part of the village's character for which there is only limited information, typically this is map based. Further desk based research may be sought in future from developers so that the impact of specific proposals on the village's character can be more accurately determined and better informed planning decisions made as a result. Further development-sponsored research will in due course lead to amendment or reaffirmation of the village character statement when the conservation area is reviewed.

Conclusions and Next Steps

It is evident from the Draft Village Appraisal and Character Statement that there is sufficient special character in Little Brickhill to designate a conservation area. The buildings, spaces, location and history of the village all combine to create a special environment that should be preserved and enhanced. The qualities and features described in the character statement need to be widely acknowledged and taken into account if the village is to develop sensitively. However it is vitally important that the local community understands, supports and contributes to the preservation and enhancement of the proposed conservation area.

Following approval to proceed with designation of the proposed conservation area boundary described in Appendix A Figure 1 the following steps should be taken:

1. Support and assistance should be sought confirmed from the Parish Council and Local Residents Association for the conservation area management process.
2. The Proposed Conservation Area should be advertised in the local community. The character statement and the attendant implications of designation should be set out.
3. Consultations will be carried out within Milton Keynes Council and with the council's partners.
4. Consideration should be given to producing a Village Design Statement for Little Brickhill. This document should set out design principles for new developments and area improvements based on the acknowledged character of the proposed conservation area and those parts of the village that lie beyond the proposed boundary. The VDS could also include the results of an Urban Design Alliance place check, or similar. The findings of tree and biodiversity surveys might also supplement the VDS. Consideration should be given to adopting the VDS as a supplement to local planning policies.
5. The need for Article 4 directions to protect street frontages of historic but unlisted properties should be considered by council.

Designating the conservation area is therefore the first step in the subsequent and ongoing commitment to manage and conserve the positive attributes of the village and seek solutions to the opportunities that present themselves. Happily, the appraisal of the village confirms that the

historic part of the village survives well and retains much that is of special interest. Nevertheless, in line with the second objective (*see p.4 of the Introduction*), the following suggestions are offered as possible ways of preserving or improving the conservation area:

1. The eastern approach to the village should be examined to see if the appearance of the modern highway layout and attendant signing could be softened.
2. There should be a presumption against cul-de-sac developments or non-linear developments in the village. Where such schemes *are* permitted provision should be made to retain or allow views and footpath links to the surrounding countryside.
3. Areas of hard landscaping using tarmac should be examined to see if alternative surfacing materials are appropriate. Future resurfacing of highway land should take into account the possibility of surviving historic materials and give consideration to their reinstatement. There should be a presumption against further areas of hard landscaping or hard standing.
4. Historic or architecturally significant walls should be preserved. There should be a presumption against their partial or complete demolition. Close board fences or other modern means of enclosure should be discouraged within the conservation area.
5. The means by which the playing field and truncated Woburn Road can be brought into more regular use should be given consideration.
6. Street lighting and signing strategies should take account of the character of the conservation area and take particular care not to intrude upon it.
7. Preferences for reusing the garage site should be considered in anticipation of the land becoming available for redevelopment..

As stated at the outset the purpose of conservation area designation is not to stifle development or growth but to ensure that it acknowledges and complements the special character that the village possesses. The information contained in this document is the first step in the process of seeking to ensure that Little Brickhill is properly prepared for the future and thus take full and proper advantage of its potential and the opportunities that come the village's way.

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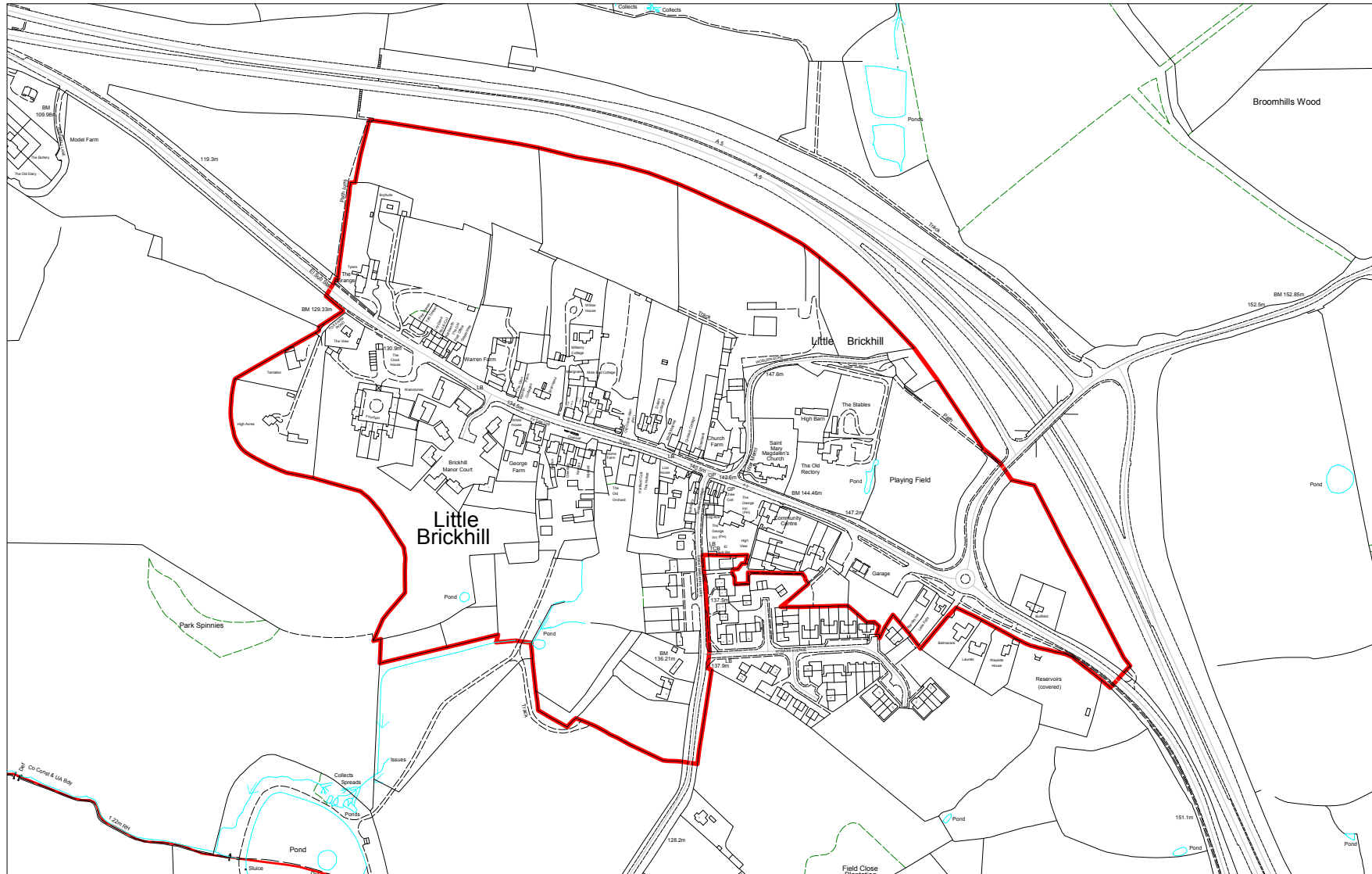
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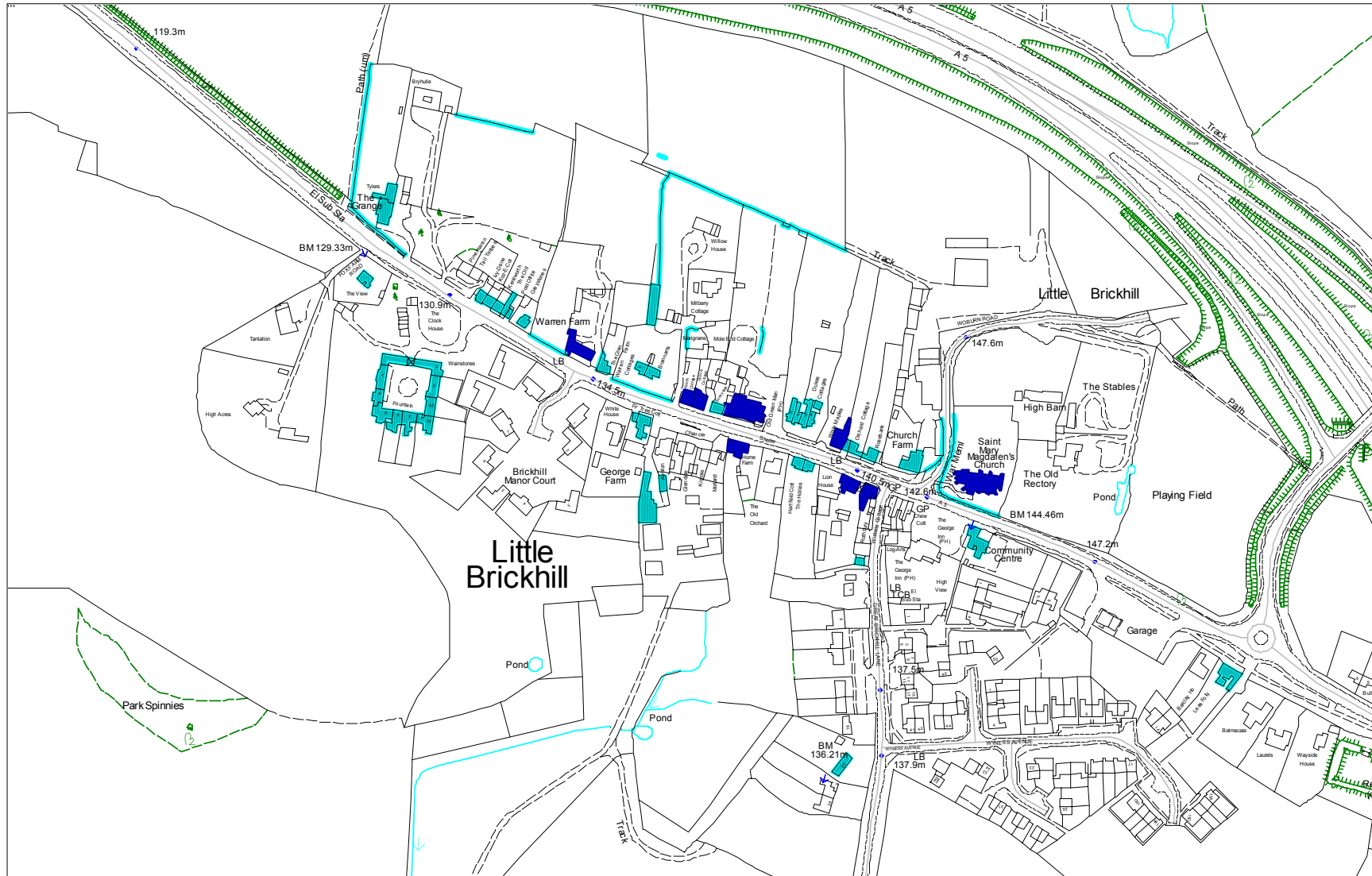
Acknowledgements

This document has been produced by Milton Keynes Council's Design and Conservation Team. The lead officer for the project is Martin Ellison (Conservation Officer) with assistance provided by Brian Giggins (Senior Archaeological Officer), Nick Crank (Assistant Archaeological Officer) and Tracey Coleman (Design and Conservation Team Leader). Also acknowledged is the preparatory work by Paul Kessler-Lyne (Student Work Experience, now Conservation Officer, South Northants Council).

Appendix A: Figure A1 - Proposed Conservation Area Boundary



Appendix A: Figure A2 - Significant Historic Buildings. (Dark Blue Shading Indicates a Listed Building)



Appendix A: Figure A3a - Significant Trees and Areas of Trees Identified in the Appraisal



Appendix A: Figure A3b - Significant Trees and Areas of Trees – aerial photo



Appendix B: Local Plan Policies

The following policy and supporting relate to the proposed conservation area designation:

CONSERVATION AREAS

Objectives of policy

- To preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance which contribute to the special interest of a designated Conservation Area
- To avoid inappropriate development in Conservation Areas following from the grant of outline planning permission
- To avoid the erosion of the special interest of a Conservation Area through the inappropriate loss of historic fabric.

5.17 The 1990 Act requires local authorities to determine whether any part of their area should be designated a Conservation Area, by virtue of its special architectural or historic interest. There are currently **25** (24) Conservation Areas in the Borough.

5.18 The Council is preparing Conservation Area Character Statements for each of the designated areas, in order to define the special interest which justified its designation. These documents will be used when assessing development proposals affecting Conservation Areas.

5.19 PPG15 provides general guidance on development control in Conservation Areas and this is supplemented in greater detail by the English Heritage guidance, "Conservation Area Practice".

Conservation Areas are identified on the Proposals Map and listed in Appendix HE2

5.19a *(Representations have been received from local councils in the settlements mentioned in Policy HE7, in favour of designing new Conservation Areas in their locality. However)* **Separate legislation and procedures cover the actual designation of new Conservation Areas. PPG15 and English Heritage guidance set out clear criteria to use when designating Conservation Areas**

5.19b Designation should not be seen as an end in itself. It should be followed by proposals to enhance the area, which has resource implications for the Council as local planning authority. The Council will consider the following areas for possible designation as Conservation Areas:

1. Little Brickhill
2. Woburn Sands
- (3. *Wolverton*)

CONSERVATION AREAS POLICY HE6

Development proposals within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

The criteria used to assess such proposals are set out in English Heritage Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas (1995); and interpreted in Character Statements for specific Conservation Areas.

Full planning applications will be required for all proposals in Conservation Areas, including detailed plans and elevations showing the new development in its setting.

Conservation consent for demolition will be refused for buildings or features that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area, unless the proposed redevelopment would enhance the character of the area.

Policies relating to Design, Areas of Attractive Landscape and Listed Buildings already apply. Listed buildings are illustrated in Appendix A2, the areas covered by Tree Preservation Orders and Area of Attractive Landscape designation are illustrated below:

Areas Covered by Tree Preservation Orders



Area Covered by Area Of Attractive Landscape Designation



Article 4 Directions:

Householders can normally make minor alterations to their houses without requiring planning permission. This is called "permitted development". However, in some areas, notably in Conservation Areas, the Council may remove these "permitted development rights" by making an Article 4 Direction.

Article 4 Directions are made under part of the planning legislation called the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. The effect of a Direction is that planning permission is required for specified classes of works that are carried out on any elevation facing a highway. These may include:

- making any alteration to the roof - this includes replacing the slates or tiles, putting in a rooflight or altering dormer windows (the insertion of dormer windows requires planning permission in any event).
- removal, replacement or alteration of windows and doors.
- painting the render or brickwork on walls.
- Boundary walls or railings

Further assessment of the village and the specific ways in which it has already changed, and may continue to change, would need to be analysed so that ongoing threats to existing character can be identified and if necessary guarded against. At this time there are no Repair and maintenance work that does not change the appearance of the property will not need planning permission provided that the same types of materials are used.

Appendix C: Materials Schedule

A variety of historic building materials are present in Little Brickhill some of which appear to have been locally produced and fashioned and others which, although mass produced and brought from elsewhere, still lend character and individuality to the village. The following pictures illustrate some of the authentic historic buildings and features found during the field walking element of the Village Appraisal, and may be used to guide choice of materials and dimensions for new development in the proposed conservation area. The details shown below are not intended to be exhaustive and it is expected that closer research could add more to what is shown below.

Stone:



Greensand masonry, an iron rich stone, is evident throughout the village. The church and a number of retaining walls are built from this material.

Brick:



The first picture shows alternate buff and red brick coursing in an unusual variation of English Bond. Over the windows are rough brick segmental arches and above them is a string course in a recessed dog tooth pattern. The second picture shows vitreous bricks laid in header bond with red brick strips forming the openings and red brick gauged arches.

Timber:



Timber is present in the village as a construction material as these dwellings show. Although refronted, the earlier timber framing is still evident in the gables. Timber was of course a key material for doors, windows, floors, stairs and internal partitions.

Roofs:



The Old School (left) is roofed in Welsh slate with blue ridge tiles whilst the cupola is finished with cedar shingles and surmounted by an iron weather vane. The junction of the roof pitches is lined with lead. At the eaves the bricks are formed into a decorative dentilated pattern. Another material found regularly on the roofs in Little Brickhill are clay tile of varying ages. Whilst some are comparatively modern there are older examples such as that found on the roof of the late 18th Century White Maples (Grade II listed) shown above right.

Doors and Windows



The imposing front of Church Farm displays three different window designs. On the ground floor are two eight pane hopper windows, on the first floor there are eight over eight vertically hung sliding sashes with two over two margin lights. Above them are three six over six sashes. A similar design is used for the windows on the east face but these windows are smaller than the intended opening. The rear wing has simpler eight pane casement windows, now a rare survival in the village, indeed the authenticity of these windows has not been confirmed. All the windows throughout the building have sills and sit flush with the face of the building, rather than being recessed. The higher status front face of the building has gauged brick flat arches whilst the casement windows have rough brick segmental arches.

The door on the main front seems to be a replacement, based on photographic evidence, but replicates a six panel raised and fielded Georgian door successfully. Over the door is a rectangular transom light. There is a 'stucco doorcase with plain pilasters, moulded console brackets which support a section of frieze and dentil cornice' (DoE list description).

Doors and Windows:



Farm buildings also have characterful doors and windows; the picture on the left shows how doors tend to be short in relation to their height, this is often the case on farmhouses too (where they tend not to be split), not just stables or barns. The picture on the right shows an iron window, the upper half of which contains 10 panes under a segmental arch whilst the lower half has a sliding 'hit and miss' opening. These windows were particularly used where horses or cattle needed well ventilated space with low light levels, or as here, in a hay barn, where grain was kept. The half and half arrangement is unusual however.

Building Groups in the Conservation Area:

A number of important building groups exist that lend particular character to the conservation area. Some of these are set out below:



The picture on the left shows just how significant brick is to establishing the character of the conservation area. In combination the roadside appearance of Warren Farmhouse and The Glen is dramatic. In the second picture The Green Man and neighbouring properties to the west form a collection of some of the oldest and most characterful buildings in the village.

Building Groups (cont)



The collection of buildings around the junction of Great Brickhill Lane and Woburn road with Watling Street arguably forms the heart of the village. Included in this group are Warren Farmhouse and the church. Although not of particular historic or architectural merit, Little Brickhill Stores add an important splash of colour and activity to this quarter of the village. A number of authentic doors and windows have been lost on some of the Victorian terraces but nevertheless the overall historic form of the village survives quite well here.

Building Groups (cont)



This terrace group forms a characterful row at the western threshold of the village.

Throughout the village there are characterful features, individual buildings and groups of buildings that in combination create a distinctive sense of place. The lack of inclusion here is not intended to indicate that a building etc does not make a contribution. A more extensive review of the village's special, authentic, historic and architectural features may be a project that the parish could undertake in due course.