

ARDLEY

Conservation Area Appraisal



Department of
Planning and Development Services

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Ardley

Conservation Area Appraisal

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is an appraisal of the proposed Ardley Conservation Area, and is based on a standard recording format derived from advice contained in documents published by English Heritage and the Royal Town Planning Institute. It outlines and describes the established character to be preserved.
- 1.2 Conservation areas were introduced in the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. The Act was presented to Parliament as a Private Members' Bill by the then president of the Civic Trust, Mr Duncan Sandys, and was born out of a concern for saving Britain's heritage, fuelled by the widespread demolition occurring mainly in towns and cities during the post war years. The 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.
- 1.3 Designation is only a first step. Following on from this, local authorities have a duty to:
- formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. These are included at Section 5 of this appraisal;
 - to present such proposals for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate;
 - to have regard to any views concerning the proposals expressed by persons attending the meeting; and
 - from time to time, consider boundary revisions.
- 1.4 Since 1967 some 8,000 conservation areas have been designated in England, including 51 in Cherwell District. As the number of conservation areas has grown it has become necessary to look more critically at the criteria for designation in order to ensure that only areas of sufficient merit are designated.
- 1.5 Conservation area legislation seeks to secure the preservation or enhancement of the area designated. Designation ensures that consideration is given to the special qualities of the area when proposals for new development are being considered. It should not be seen as a means of preventing development, but rather of ensuring that these areas remain responsive to change, balancing demands for new development with the need to preserve the special character of the area.
- 1.6 For further information on the controls that apply in conservation areas see Section 7.

2. LOCATION

- 2.1 The village of Ardley is situated at the cusp of the Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands and the Upper Heyford Plateau Landscape Character Areas (Cobham Resource Consultants, 1995), and lies approximately 9.5 kilometers (6 miles) northwest of Bicester. The village is located at the junction of the M40 and the A43 / B430 adjacent to the Banbury-to-London Marylebone railway line. The area is crossed by numerous country lanes that interconnect Bicester and the villages of the Cherwell Valley.

3. HISTORY

3.1 Origin

- 3.1.1 There is no evidence of a Roman settlement in the village itself, although pottery and coins have been found at Ballard's Copse in the parish. The Saxons called the settlement Eardulfe's Lea or Ardulf's Lea, 'Eardwulfs' wood or clearing'. A fragment of pre-Saxon woodland still exists to the west of the village. Ardley Wood and Ballard's Copse are the remains of more extensive woodland. Ardley Wood was partly cut down in the early 19th century to facilitate quarrying.
- 3.1.2 Field names indicate that much land in the parish was originally rough pasture. Such names include Great Heath, Heath Ground and Little Heath. By the 19th century this land had been reclaimed and was growing arable crops.
- 3.1.3 In the 10th century a fort was erected at 'Arduvesley', one of many fortified positions made necessary by the unrest between the Britons and the invading Danes.
- 3.1.4 At the time of the Domesday survey Hugh d'Avranches, Earl of Chester, held the Ardley estate. He constructed a castle on the site of the Saxon fortress. This castle most probably had a part to play during the civil war in the 12th century. The medieval manor house of the 13th century is likely to have been located within the precincts of the castle, although the only evidence now remaining of the castle is the almost circular moat, now classified as a scheduled ancient monument (SM 28166).
- 3.1.5 Throughout the 13th century the Wydo family were resident at Ardley. The family was a liberal benefactor to the neighbourhood. It is therefore probable that one of the early members of this family was responsible for the foundation of the current church replacing the church of Saxon times (Bloomfield, 1894).
- 3.1.6 In 1538, it is thought that Sir Thomas Pope, founder of Trinity College Oxford, bought land in Ardley and by 1555 he had obtained the estate. In 1753 Ardley was purchased by Charles, Duke of Marlborough, whose descendants held the manor until 1894 when Ardley estates were sold by auction (Victoria County History, 1959).

3.2 Development and population

- 3.2.1 In the 10th century, at the time of King Ethelred, there was estimated to be five hides of arable land (a hide being an uncertain measure thought to be about eight hectares). At the time of the Domesday Survey the area of cultivated land had increased sufficiently to support eleven ploughs and the labour of twenty-three men and their families. The village never seems to have been either very large

or very rich. The 15th century saw a decline in the population, so that by 1665 there were only 9 humble dwellings listed for hearth tax. The 1676 Compton Census put the population of the village at 51 adults. During the 18th and 19th centuries the village grew. By 1768 there were 20 houses. By 1801 the village population was 109 and in 1821 it stood at 191, recorded as living in 35 dwellings. Early maps indicate that the village was made up of dwellings built along Church Road, Somerton Road and Station Road.

3.2.2 The Fox and Hounds Inn, standing at the crossroads at the northern end of the village was probably built/re-built at the end of the 18th century to cater for turnpike traffic (Victoria County History, 1959).

3.2.3 The first school in Ardley opened in 1815 and it is known that 21 children attended at their parents' expense. In 1861 a school for 60 pupils was built at the expense of the Duke of Marlborough. There were 65 pupils in 1871, but by 1906 attendance had fallen to 29. The school was closed in 1914 and children transferred to Middleton Stoney (Victoria County History, 1959). The school building, which was located on a plot of land adjacent to The Old Post Office, no longer stands.

3.3 Architectural History

3.3.1 Tithe records show that there was a church in Ardley by 1074. The present church (Grade II* listed), dedicated to St Mary, dates from the 13th or 14th century and was largely rebuilt at the end of the eighteenth century. Alterations included the replacement of the original two-aisled nave by a plain nave. The 13th century arch and piscina still exist, as do the 14th century chancel windows and elaborate recess on the north wall. In 1834 a western gallery was built for the inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Fewcott. The present building comprises the following elements: a chancel, nave and tower with a saddleback roof.

3.3.2 There are a number of 17th century properties in the village. Ardley House, which was once the rectory and Hunters Cottage date from this time.

3.4 Archaeology

3.4.1 Remains of the castle are to be found in Ardley Wood just west of the village which comprise an almost circular moat with a diameter of approximately 100 metres. This is now a scheduled ancient monument (SM 28166). It is probable that the triangular field, called the Park, on the northwest side of the church was within the boundary of the 12th century castle (Victoria County History, 1959).

3.4.2 Other evidence of early settlement includes the site of fishponds on the land west of Ardley Road, which although slightly altered, are thought to date from medieval times. While the two smaller ponds are now filled in, the larger westernmost pond, known as The Fishpond, still exists.

3.4.3 There is evidence of house platforms in the fields north west of Ardley House and north west of the church.

4. ESTABLISHED CHARACTER

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The conservation area contains a number of character zones, each with their own identifying features. This section first describes the general features of the conservation area and then looks at the features of each character zone.

General characteristics

4.2 Topography

- 4.2.1 The parish of Ardley with Fewcott lies in flat tableland lying between the 120 and 130-metre contour lines, part of the Great Oolite stone belt that crosses the country.

4.3 Settlement Pattern

- 4.3.1 Ardley is located to the west of the B430, the main Oxford to Brackley Road. The village has a dispersed settlement form. In essence, Ardley is a village of two halves, separated by an area of open land to the west of Ardley Road that is currently in agricultural use.
- 4.3.2 The southern half of the village includes a dispersed collection of dwellings loosely grouped around the historic church. This area is characterised by open spaces, narrow lanes, hedges and stone walls which all contribute to the special character of this part of Ardley.
- 4.3.3 The northern half of the village consists of modern development on a much denser scale, based around Russet Road, Water Lane and Ardley Road. This area is excluded from the proposed conservation area.

4.4 Land Use

- 4.4.1 The majority of the building stock within the village is residential. The only commercial premises in the village are the garage at the corner of Ardley Road and Station Road (now closed down) and The Fox and Hounds public house on the eastern side of Station Road.
- 4.4.2 Outside the immediate confines of the village land use is very varied. To the south there is a commercial waste dump. To the south-west there is a disused quarry (now designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SP52.1)) and the former RAF Upper Heyford base. To the north there is the M40 and service station and the village of Fewcott. Agriculture is interspersed with these other uses. However, within the village there are no longer any working farms.

4.5 Building Type and Style

- 4.5.1 The buildings in the south of the village are a dispersed mixture of houses, farmhouses and cottages in rural vernacular style.
- 4.5.2 In addition to the church there are approximately 29 dwellings that include the Fox and Hounds Public House as well as buildings that were formerly the rectory, the post office and a number of farmhouses. The new infill developments on Church Road have been built in stone and brick, in a neo-vernacular style reminiscent of other cottages in the lane.

4.6 Scale, Construction and Materials (elevations, roofs, chimneys, windows, doors and porches)

- 4.6.1 Coursed limestone rubble, with flush or buttered lime mortar pointing, predominates in the building construction of the oldest properties in the village. Early chimneys are of limestone, many with the upper shafts having been renewed in red brick. Twentieth century properties are built in brick, stone or imitation stone.
- 4.6.2 Roofing materials vary throughout the village. Hunters Cottage is the only remaining thatched property in the village. Other materials include old red clay tiles, Welsh slate, Stonesfield slate on the church and concrete tiles. The majority of the roofs are gabled, some with gabled dormers, although some of the more recent properties have hipped roofs.
- 4.6.3 The windows on the oldest properties in the village are either vertically sliding timber sash windows or painted timber casements. A number of the oldest properties have wooden lintels, such as those of Hunters Cottage. Others have brick or stone lintels, such as those of Manor Farm and Nos. 1 and 2 Jersey Cottages, Station Road.
- 4.6.4 Early doors tend to be paneled, with either stone or brick surrounds.

4.7 Features of Special Interest

- 4.7.1 The church of St Mary, Ardley, (Grade II* listed) dates from the 13th or 14th and 18th centuries. Materials used in the construction of the chancel, nave and west tower include limestone and some marlstone rubble with limestone ashlar dressing. The roof covering is Stonesfield slate. The chancel and nave each have five windows, the sixth nave window is blocked in. The chancel has a 14th century priest's door. The tower with saddle back roof has a pointed arched doorway and a window above.
- 4.7.2 Castle and moat. Originally a 10th century Saxon fortification. A small castle of simple stone and wood construction, now non-extant, was built on the site in the 12th century (Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM 28166)).
- 4.7.3 Hunters Cottage (Grade II listed) is the oldest known dwelling in the village dating from the late 17th century. Built from coursed limestone rubble, with wooden lintels and thatched roof. The dwelling has a rubble and brick gable stack with two brick shafts. There are three large timber casement windows on the roadside, which have wooden lintels and two small staircase windows again with wooden frames.
- 4.7.4 Manor Farm (Grade II listed), located on the south side of Somerton Road, was built by Richard Young who came into possession of Ardley estate in 1746. Young had the old farmhouse demolished and the current house built on the same site. The farmhouse is constructed from limestone rubble, with three rubble and brick stacks and two later brick stacks. The hipped roof is now of concrete tiles but stone slate is likely to have been the original roof covering.
- 4.7.5 The land which includes Ardley Wood, the Earthworks, the disused quarry and the railway cutting has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SP52.1).
- 4.7.6 There are the medieval fishponds on land to the west of Ardley Road.
- 4.7.7 Ardley has several dwellings and other structures which, although not listed in their own right, contribute significantly to the conservation area. This local list includes:

- Ardley House, once the rectory, located in the centre of the conservation area, dates from the 17th century, but has been enlarged at different times in the 17th and 19th centuries.
- Barns and outbuildings of Ardley House and Manor Farm, located along Somerton Road.
- Laburnum Cottage, Somerton Road.
- Klaren Cottage, Adcott, the Old Post Office and Orchard Cottage, a group of dwellings on Church Road.
- Tithe Cottage and Church House, Church Road.
- The dark green corrugated iron garage to the East of Tithe Cottage.
- The Old Rectory, Church Road, has two 'blind' or blocked windows. This was probably due to the window tax, instigated in 1694 and repealed in 1851.
- Jersey Cottages, Station Road, estate style cottages built by Blenheim Estates in 1870.
- Lenham, Somerton Road, with its bread oven bulge.
- The water pump with cast-iron railings, adjacent to Lenham.
- Stonecroft, Somerton Road, a 19th century gothic revival style dwelling.
- The Fox and Hounds Public House, built in the 18th century.
- The historic barns associated with the public house.
- Exton Cottage, Station Road.

4.8 Means of Enclosure

4.8.1 Limestone walls are the principal means of enclosure. The walls vary in height, from less than 1 metre around the church to over 2 metres around Ardley House. Climbing plants obscure many of the walls. Capping details vary. The walls enclosing the churchyard and along the west side of Station Road have triangular stones. Ridge tiles can be seen on parts of the taller sections of wall around Ardley House and Manor Farmhouse. Many sections of wall have been altered since they were originally built. Sections of some walls, on Church Road for example, have been mortared between the stones. Also lengths of wall on Church Road and Somerton Road have had the original capping stones replaced by concrete mortar. All these wall contribute significantly to the sense of enclosure along the lanes.

4.9 Trees, Hedges, Open Spaces and Greens

4.9.1 Open spaces form a critical aspect of the character of the village. There is a large area of land used for grazing to the west of Ardley Road. This is an important piece of land as it is a significant area of open space acting as a buffer between the historic core of the main village of Ardley and 20th century residential development to the north and west. There are views across this land from a number of vantage points in the village, as well as south towards the medieval fishponds. The undeveloped land northwest of Laburnum Cottage is also particularly valuable in this respect.

4.9.2 Mature trees and hedgerows make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the southern part of the village. Hedgerows are found interspersed in limited places with the stone walls. This juxtaposition together with the many mature trees adds to the rural scene. The large numbers of trees found to the north and east of Ardley House and in the grounds of the church contribute significantly to the setting.

4.9.3 Ardley Wood and the woodland that has colonised the site of the castle contain the vistas to the south west.

4.10 Carriageways, Pavements, Footpaths and Bridleways

4.10.1 The southern part of the village has narrow, winding lanes that are bordered by narrow grass verges, stone walls and the occasional dwelling. There is a limited stretch of pedestrian footpath adjacent to Somerton Road as it runs between the paddocks. This general lack of footpaths gives Somerton Road and Church Road a sense of enclosure.

4.10.2 There are a number of public footpaths crossing the conservation area, these are accessed by a stile on the path towards the Earthworks and a gate across the paddocks.

4.11 Character Zones

4.12 Visual Analysis

4.12.1 Although there are no spectacular views into or out of Ardley, there are a number of localised views within the village. There are views to the church from a number of places within the village. The conservation area consists principally of two quiet lanes west of Station Road. The enclosed character of the lanes contrasts with the openness of the paddocks. This contrast contributes to the rural village feel of the village.

5. PROPOSALS FOR PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

5.1 Proposals for preservation

- Preservation through new use. The finding of new uses for redundant agricultural and other outbuildings is one option for their preservation.
- Preservation through routine maintenance. The productive life of a number of outbuildings, for example the corrugated iron garages, could be extended with ongoing sympathetic maintenance.
- Preservation by continued traditional use. Encourage continued stock/large animal grazing of the paddocks.

5.2 Proposals for enhancement

- Any additions and modifications should be sympathetic and in keeping.
- New uses for redundant outbuildings. Although the buildings in the conservation area appear well maintained from their external appearance many outbuildings are in a derelict state and give the impression of being unwanted and left over from previous land use.
- Address the needs for repair and general management, which contribute to a number of negative factors within the southern half of the village.

Management

- Verge maintenance. Many of the grass verges have been cut-up by vehicular traffic.
- Clearing of footpath between Laburnum Cottage and Manor Barn.
- Removal of materials on track to the south of the village.
- Repair turnstiles and fences.
- Relocation of footpath sign and removal of 30mph sign at east end of Orchard Road.

The Paddock

- Removal of the poor quality barbed wire and post fence inside the stone wall to the north-west of the church.
- Management of climbing plants overgrowing wall and weeds in between wall and fence.

Enclosures

- The iron rail fence along the west side of the churchyard requires prompt maintenance and repair.
- Some of the stone walls within the village have been altered from their original state.
- Reinststate original character of stone walls, especially the cappings.

Poor quality buildings

- Unsympathetic modernisation of 18th and 19th century buildings, particular in the choice of uPVC windows, has had a negative impact on the character of these dwellings. The retention of traditional architectural detailing is to be strongly encouraged.
- Stonework on the church tower has been repointed using a hard concrete mix. This has caused the stone surface to spall and accelerate the deterioration of the surface of the tower wall. The use of traditional building materials, in this case lime mortar, is to be promoted.
- There are a number of properties where non-traditional building materials and styles inappropriate to the character of the village have been used. The

use of traditional materials and sympathetic architectural design is to be encouraged in all restoration and development.

- Improvement of pebble-dash garage and metal door on Station Road.
- Tidying up of sheds backing onto land west of Ardley Road.

Landscape – Surfaces, enclosure, planting, etc.

- Improvement to parking area opposite Stonecroft.
- Soft landscaping to access to Lenham by tree planting.
- Discourage parking and driving on the grass verges.

6. JUSTIFICATION FOR CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

6.1. A conservation area is "**an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance**".

6.2. The proposed boundary has been drawn to include:

- the historic core of the village centered around the church;
- the Earthworks to the west of the village;
- the open space in the village; and
- the medieval fish pond on the land west of Ardley Road.

For the most part the boundary follows strong visual and/or natural boundaries such as hedges, walls and roads. The boundary can be summarised in the following way:

Southern boundary – the boundary is to the south of White Cottage, heads north to the curtilage of the Old Rectory, and west to the Earthworks.

Western boundary – the boundary extends from the Earthworks northwards to the south of Laburnum Cottage and adjacent to Meadowbank, and crosses Somerton Road, whilst including Hunter's Cottage.

Northern boundary – the boundary circumnavigates the Ardley meadow and the Ardley garage, extending to the eastern side of Station Road.

Eastern boundary – east of Station Road, including the historic building associated with the public house.

6.3. The southern part of the proposed conservation area boundary begins just south of White Cottage on Station Road and turns northwards to hug the rear boundaries of the properties off Station Road. These cottages are within the proposed designation as they are of architectural and historic interest. It excludes the wider land to the rear of these dwellings which is used for agricultural purposes. The boundary then continues along the south of the village to include the buildings on Church Road and Manor Farm with its grounds, which all have significant architectural and historic interest as well as adding to the rural character of the southern half of the village.

6.4. The boundary then includes the Earthworks to the west of the village which make an important contribution to the early history of the village. This site marks the location of the remains of an almost circular

moat. Further north the proposed designation runs along the line of trees to the rear of Laburnum Cottage and the land to the north. The preservation of this small piece of open land, that is keeping it free of development, is desirable and can be best achieved by inclusion within the conservation area. The inclusion of this plot will also ensure that the historic core of Ardley village is not subsumed within the 20th century development to the north.

- 6.5. To the north west of the village the proposed boundary includes Hunters Cottage, the only remaining thatched dwelling in the village. It excludes Castlefields to the north, the dwellings on the opposite side of Somerton Road and the three properties to the south as they are all 20th century developments which do not fulfil the criteria of special architectural or historic interest.
- 6.6. The large area of open land to the west of Ardley Road is a significant area of open space which not only contributes to the character of Ardley, but also includes an historical element in the medieval fish ponds located to the west of this piece of land. It is desirable to preserve the informal rural character of this land, the public footpaths that cross it and the views into and out of the village core from it.
- 6.7. To the east of the village the boundary excludes the garage site since this site does not meet the criteria for conservation area designation. To the north east corner of the village the boundary includes Exton Cottage, The Fox and Hounds Public House and the historic barn behind it which are all buildings that are of historic interest and important focal point at the junction of the main road running north/south and the Bucknell Road to the east. The eastern boundary runs along the east side of Station Road and includes the Church of St Mary and the cottages north of Somerton Road, which are of architectural and historic interest. Also included is the paddock to the north west of the church. This space in the centre of the historic core of Ardley contributes to the setting of the historic church as well as the open nature of the original settlement.
- 6.8. Only the historic core of the village of Ardley has been included in the proposed conservation area as the northern part of the village consists of modern development and consequently does not meet with conservation area designation criteria. Different planning controls apply in conservation areas (see section 7) therefore it is vital that only areas which are demonstrably of special architectural or historic interest be included in the designated area.

7. THE EFFECTS OF CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION AND RELATED PLANNING POLICIES

7.1. Conservation areas are designated by the Council under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. There are different planning controls in conservation areas and anyone proposing development should seek advice from the Department of Planning and Development Services at an early stage. The main effects of designation are:

7.1.1 Development should preserve or enhance the area

Development should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, the special architectural or historic interest of which it is desirable to conserve. This will enable the achievement of higher standards of design in new developments and secure the conservation of existing important features and characteristics. Information supporting planning applications must demonstrate the proposal, and its impact on the conservation area, in sufficient detail to enable a thorough assessment.

7.1.2 Control over demolition of buildings

Conservation Area Consent is required from the Council, as local planning authority, for the demolition or substantial demolition of unlisted buildings in the conservation area. Where a building is of demonstrable architectural or historic interest, consent for demolition will only be given as a last resort.

7.1.3 Control over trees

The Council must be notified of any intention to carry out works to fell, lop or top any tree over 75 mm (3 inches approx.) in diameter not already the subject of a tree preservation order. This provides the Council an opportunity to consider making a tree preservation order. This will provide an extra degree of control over the many trees that are important to the appearance of the conservation area.

7.1.4 Protection of important open spaces

There are a number of open spaces within the village that it is important to protect because they are integral to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The inclusion of these open spaces in the designation of the conservation area is specifically to ensure that these spaces are preserved.

7.1.5 Control over the demolition of enclosures

Consent is also required to demolish any means of enclosure over 1 metre in height abutting a 'highway' (including a public footpath or bridleway), waterway or open space; or above 2 metres in height in any other case. This will mean that stone walls not relating to listed buildings, that add so much to the character and appearance of the village, will be afforded protection for the first time.

7.1.6 Powers to seek repair of unlisted historic buildings

The Council has powers to seek the repair of unlisted (as well as listed) buildings in a poor state of repair where the building makes a valuable contribution to the streetscene or is of local importance as a building type.

7.1.7 **Reduced permitted development rights**

The size of house and industrial extensions that may be carried out without specific planning permission is more restricted. Planning permission is also required for some additional alterations to dwellings:

- the cladding of the exterior of buildings;
- the construction of a (dormer) roof extension;
- the erection of satellite dishes fronting a highway.

7.1.8 **Enhancements should preserve and enhance the area**

Land use planning policies in the Cherwell Local Plan aim to ensure that special attention is given to the preservation or enhancement of designated conservation areas, and proposals for new development will only be acceptable if they assist in the achievement of that objective.

8. SOURCES OF ADVICE AND GRANT-AID

- 8.1. Where enhancement proposals are included within a character appraisal document, the Council seeks to encourage environmental initiatives which would preserve or enhance the special qualities and character of the conservation area, which have been identified in the character appraisal.
- 8.2. Parish Councils, Parochial Church Councils, Statutory Undertakers and local bodies and individuals may seek advice from the Council in carrying out schemes of environmental improvement. Such schemes should aim to cover the enhancement proposals identified in the appraisal document as a first priority but inevitably priorities will need reassessment and modification in future years.
- 8.3. There are no discretionary grants currently available towards the preservation of buildings of architectural or historic interest.

For further information please write or telephone Planning and Development Services.

Enquiries should be addressed to:

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