

APPENDIX

ABSTRACT FROM THE FEN DITTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL SETTING OUT KEY CHARACTERISTICS, ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND DESIGN GUIDANCE TO PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA.

8.0 KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- 8.1 Scale: A mix of scales co-exist e.g. higher Victorian two storeys next to single storey. Only the grander buildings such as St Mary Virgin Church, Ditton Hall and The Old Rectory rise to 2½ storeys. Otherwise the tallest domestic buildings in the village are two storeys including C19 houses and cottages and the most substantial timber-framed structures such as the King's Head Public House. Other buildings in the village are generally 1½ storeys.
- 8.2 Walling Materials: Early traditional buildings are timber-framed and plastered. Fen Ditton Hall is built from a C17 red brick. Later traditional buildings are of red brick and gault brick which were commonly used until the early C19 when a local stock (gault) brick was introduced. In many cases this covers earlier timber-framed structures, and occasionally the bricks are painted. Weatherboarding is very common in the village for agricultural buildings, outbuildings and occasionally on the gable ends of houses.
- 8.3 Roofing Materials: Traditional buildings are thatched or have local plain-tile roofs. The oldest domestic buildings in the village have (or had) thatched roofs in the local tradition of long straw. Some have been replaced by corrugated iron sheet or clay peg tiles. The latter originally were of plain buff colour, but due to repairs over the centuries, most roofs are now in the attractive 'Cambridgeshire mix' combination of buff, brown and red tiles, and are attractive in their own right. Some later replacements are in machine-made new tiles which lack the variation in colour and texture of the traditional hand-made tiles. Welsh slate roofs are common on the C19 buildings in the village. Red and buff pantiles are commonly found on outbuildings and to a lesser extent on a few older dwellings.
- 8.4 Roof forms: There are a variety of roof forms in the village, but pitched structures are dominant and include gambrel, half hipped, hipped, mansard forms and lean-to additions. Many roofs have half dormers, but there are also full dormers (usually gabled) and catslides on several houses. The earliest vernacular buildings have steeply pitched roofs usually to accommodate thatch, whilst some of the lower pitched roofs in the village are on C19 buildings and are covered with Welsh slate.
- 8.5 Location on the plot: Buildings are often set gable end to the street creating positive breaks in the streetscene, and containing views. Whilst this gives considerable interest to the street scene, it means that the 'backs' as well as the 'fronts' of properties are easily visible. Several properties have side or rear service wings. Most other properties sit parallel with the street either directly on the back of the footway or more often behind small front gardens. Only the largest properties (such as The Old Rectory and Ditton Hall) are some distance from the road in extensive grounds.
- 8.6 Windows and doors: Traditional window details especially 'Yorkshire sliders' (horizontal sashes) survive on many properties, typically the more modest houses. Sash windows and more common casement windows are also evident on both grand and smaller houses, although several houses have been disfigured by the insertion of modern windows and doors.
- 8.7 Boundary walls, verges and paths have a strong linear role in the village, particularly along High Street. Walls tend to be constructed of the same materials as the buildings which they border and in the majority of cases, this is gault brick. The exceptions are walls to grander properties such as Home Farmhouse (pink and gault brick) and Ditton Hall and Flendyshe

House (red and gault brick). Throughout the village, buildings or walls come close to the back of the footpath and retained older boundary walls serve to screen much of the new infill development. Hedges also have an important townscape function in the village, particularly in Green End where some of the traditional field hedges are still intact.

- 8.8 The agricultural character of the village is very important especially at the western end of the village, along High Ditch Road, where (converted) barns line the road and there are views of the fine groups of farm buildings. The linear nature of much of the village also means that views out into the open fields surrounding Fen Ditton can be seen from many parts of the village.
- 8.9 Vistas of the river can be glimpsed from the northern end of the Green End and from the western end of High Street whilst views of the open countryside can be seen behind many properties throughout the village and from the small breaks in the building line such as along the High Street between Highfield House and Wadloes Footpath.
- 8.10 The village is well provided with mature trees and shrubs which provide punctuation and enclosure. Some of the trees have considerable scale and provide a backcloth for the traditional buildings in the village. The key group is around the church and The Old Rectory at the western end of the High Street.
- 8.11 Spaces: The linear nature of the village means that there are no formal spaces, although the war memorial in its grass island and adjacent parking area together with the space at the junction of High Street and Horningsea Road hint at municipal spaces. The churchyard, is of a reasonable scale and the Plough Inn has extensive riverside grounds. The main public open spaces are, however, the water meadows on the bank of the River Cam.

9.0 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

Additions

- 9.1 Nos. 104 and 106 Ditton Lane (west side) are the most southerly, and last, properties of the original village before the ribbon development of C20 Local Authority housing. Although No. 104 is not in itself of sufficient quality to warrant inclusion, No. 106 is a substantial late C19 house with many surviving original features and which relates well to the road and the open green space on the opposite side of the road. Both properties are part of the history of Fen Ditton and effectively form the end of the original village.
- 9.2 The open field on the corner of Ditton Lane and High Ditch Road is very important to the setting of Honeysuckle Cottage and contributes to the setting of the properties on the west side of Ditton Lane. The space also creates a definite stop in the street, helping to preserve the separateness of the original village from the suburbs which extend to Cambridge city. The row of Rowan trees along the Ditton Lane side of the field were planted to mark the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. It is therefore proposed that the whole of this field and Nos. 104 and 106 Ditton Lane be included within the Conservation Area boundary.

Removals

- 9.3 Shepherds Close (at the eastern end of High Ditch Road) appears to have been built on land which originally formed part of Manor Farm. However, now that the land has been built upon with residential properties, its character has changed and no longer has any relationship with the remainder of the Manor Farm buildings. The boundary can be modified to exclude them without compromising any other parts of the Conservation Area.

- 9.4 Wildfowl Cottage (Baits Bite Lock), although of historic interest and an attractive building, does not really relate to the rest of the village. Instead, it is proposed that Wildfowl Cottage and the adjacent riverside frontage north of the A14 be included in an extended Baits Bite Lock Conservation Area.

10.0 ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- 10.1 Many properties in the village have had their original timber windows and doors replaced in modern materials such as uPVC or in modern styles, often changing the vertical / horizontal emphasis of the buildings' elevations in the process. Owners of these properties should be encouraged to reinstate traditional fenestration patterns and materials. The District Council may seek to make 'Article 4 Directions' to retain traditional detailing on the exterior of non-listed buildings within the Conservation Area, where such details have not already been lost.
- 10.2 The junction of the four main roads running through the village (Ditton Lane, High Ditch Road, High Street and Horningsea Road) is jumble of signs, bollards and street crossing paraphernalia. By rationalising the street clutter, the townscape of this area could be significantly improved.
- 10.3 Improving the landscaping of the green space adjacent to the road junction would help to create an attractive entrance to the village because at present, the rather non-descript area does not reflect the high quality townscape the village offers. The space is not a place to linger in, although a bench is provided; the plinth of the village sign could also be constructed in more sympathetic materials.
- 10.4 At the dog-leg bend along Green End / Church Street, and screening No. 11 Church Street, there is some non-indigenous planting which although not unattractive in its own right, appears out of place in this location. Replacement of this landscaping with more appropriate indigenous species could be considered.
- 10.5 Although fairly well-screened from the road, the side elevation of the Plough Inn Public House and its car parking area could be tidied up. The roadside elevation of the pub has air conditioning units attached and a slightly run down appearance from the road; the slate roof of the car park canopy building needs an overhaul. Better screening of the pub building with an appropriate hedge or shrub boundary may be the best solution.
- 10.6 Subject to the availability of funding, the District Council may make discretionary grants available towards the repair of certain historic buildings and structures within the district. These grants are made to encourage the use of traditional materials and craft techniques and are generally targeted at Listed Buildings, though visually prominent non-listed buildings within Conservation Areas may also be eligible for grant aid. More specific advice on the availability of grants, as well as on appropriate materials and detailing, is available from the Conservation Section within Development Services Directorate at the District Council.

11.0 DESIGN GUIDANCE TO PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA

- 11.1 These policies should be read in conjunction with those in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. Summaries of relevant policies are provided in Appendix A, but it is advisable to consult the Local Plan itself.
- 11.2 In considering the design of new buildings or extensions to existing ones, the council will take into account the impact of the proposal on the setting of Listed Buildings and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Section 8 of this document sets out some of the key characteristics which need to be considered if a design is to fit comfortably

with its neighbours. The following will also be important in determining whether a new development is acceptable:-

Scale - buildings should relate to the scale of adjacent buildings and not exceed two and a half storeys in height. Steeply-pitched roof forms are the norm for vernacular buildings in the area, but care must be taken to ensure that the roof proportion is appropriate for the building and location. Any dormers, etc. should be appropriately detailed and scaled and rooflights ideally only provided on less visible slopes.

Location on the plot - buildings should respect established building lines unless there are good reasons for setting back further within the plot to maintain frontage trees or hedgelines.

Materials – Fen Ditton has a limited palette of materials illustrated in part 8 of this report. This palette should be used as a guide for new development, though care should be taken to ensure that, for example, high status materials are not used for low-key building styles.

Colours - traditional subdued earthy tones of paint and render are still used in the village. Encouragement should be given to ensure that very strident colours are not used in new developments to avoid them over-dominating the traditional buildings of the village.

Archaeology - due regard should be given to the archaeological sensitivity and importance of Fleam Dyke, Little Ditton and Green End areas.

- 11.3 Boundaries, in particular the walls along High Street, are very important to the character of the village and those identified in this report should be repaired and retained. When new buildings are being considered, or new walls or fences erected to surround existing buildings, it is important to ensure that the style and material chosen is appropriate for the type of building and its location within the village.
- 11.4 The grass verges are especially important to the character of the village in establishing a rural setting to the street. The District Council will work with the Parish Council to encourage the Highway Authority and statutory undertakers to ensure verges are not removed or damaged.
- 11.5 Trees are an important feature of the village's character and therefore trees should not be removed when they contribute positively to the character of the village generally or the setting of specific buildings or groups. Where such trees have to be removed for safety reasons replanting with appropriate species should take place.
- 11.6 The District Council will encourage the Highway Authority and statutory undertakers to reduce the visual clutter and impact of plant, road signs and other street furniture. Where signs are needed, their size should be kept to the minimum allowable and, wherever possible, they should be fixed to existing features rather than being individually pole-mounted. Appropriate designs and colours for street furniture will be encouraged and necessary but unattractive plant should be appropriately screened.