



South
Cambridgeshire
District Council

Little Gransden conservation area

Draft council policy (Ref: DCV 0034)



Almshouses at Church St.
— Little Gransden. —

2005

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The proposed Little Gransden Conservation Area will be considered for designation by South Cambridgeshire District Council. This document sets out the special architectural and historic interest of Little Gransden and aims to fulfil the District Council's duty to 'draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement' of these areas as required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the commitment made by policy EN29 in the Local Plan (adopted February 2004). This document includes; a character appraisal, design guidance for new development, and policies for the management of the area in order to preserve its character.
- 1.2 This paragraph will report on public consultation exercise and confirm the status of the appraisal as Council Policy.

2.0 WHAT ARE CONSERVATION AREAS?

- 2.1 Conservation Areas are defined as '*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'.
- 2.2 When a Conservation Area has been designated, it increases the Council's powers, with planning applications judged by their impact on the character and appearance of the area. Greater controls over the demolition of buildings and structures are imposed, whilst the rights that owners have to do works to their properties without planning permission (known as 'permitted development rights') are reduced or taken away. Stricter controls are also exercised over the design of new buildings and owners must give the Council six week's notice of their intention to carry out works to trees. Planning applications affecting a Conservation Area must be advertised on site and in the local press, to give people the opportunity to comment.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF THE AREA

- 3.1 Little Gransden lies on the boarder of South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, 12 miles west of Cambridge. The village falls into two distinct parts; at the north end is a typical nucleated village based on the church, while to the south the village has a linear form running alongside Gransden Brook in the valley. This southern part of the settlement

has dwellings scattered alongside Main Road interspersed with small fields, hedgerows and woodland. In the northern part, the village widens with two side roads (Primrose Hill and Church Street). This is the historic core, with the parish church, farmhouses and cottages. The fields to the north of the village form an important physical separation between the villages of Little and Great Gransden.

4.0 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE

- 4.1 In the Domesday Book this area is named Gratenden, or 'Granta's valley' and the lands belonged to Ely from the C10 to the C16, with the original village forming virtually an extension to Ely's holdings in Great Gransden, but separated by low-lying ground where the Gransden and Home Dole brooks meet. There was a small settlement around the church and an adjacent manor house for the bishops of Ely's estate at Berry Close, where a hall, chamber, kitchen, dovecote and farm-buildings were recorded as 'ruinous' by 1356. However, one of the remarkable features of the village has always been its extraordinarily long, linear extension to the south, which extended for nearly a mile along Gransden Brook and was presumably built to accommodate the rapidly expanding population in the C12 and C13. The subsequent decline of the population following the Black Death lead to the virtual abandonment of much of this southern extension, especially those properties furthest from the village centre, but four dwellings still stood at Crow' End (at the southern extremity) until the middle of the C19.
- 4.2 The Domesday population was recorded at only 11, but grew to 75 tenants (equating to approximately 375 people) in 1279 and, in spite of the decline in rural population following the Black Death, there were still 126 taxpayers in 1377. During the C17 there were 46 householders and in 1801 the population was recorded as 232. The village continued to grow during the C19 and peaked at 305 people in 1871. After that it declined to 168 in 1931 and its post war growth has been modest, only reaching 220 by 1996. Modern developments have been concentrated at the village's northeast corner on Primrose Hill, where council houses and a new village hall were built in the 1960s.
- 4.3 The heavy soils of Little Gransden were mostly used for arable farming, from which

extensive 'ridge and furrow' field patterns remain. The open fields were enclosed following an Award made in 1826. Aside from arable fields, the area has always been comparatively well wooded. Woodland for 60 pigs was recorded in the Domesday Book and Hayley Wood to the southeast was regularly coppiced from before C13 until the early C20. The high, flat land along the eastern boundary of the parish was usually devoted to pasture, being hard to drain, and was formerly the village common. In 1940 the area was requisitioned for an airfield, called Gransden Lodge Airfield, which was operational from 1941 to 1946 and was home for the Royal Canadian Air Force 405 (Vancouver) Squadron.

5.0 GEOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

- 5.1 The village is generally surrounded by agricultural land and is sited on Lower Greensand from the Cretaceous period, though much of the adjacent farmland is on gault clay, and the village lies within the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands Landscape Character Area.
- 5.2 The village is divided into two halves by the Gransden Brook, which flows in a northerly direction through the settlement in a relatively steep valley on its way to join the River Great Ouse at St. Neots (about 7 miles to the north-west). The greater part of the historic core of the village is located on Church Street around the church of St Peter and St Paul, which lies on the higher ground to the west of Gransden Brook. The more recent development in the village has taken place along Primrose Hill on rising ground to the east of Gransden Brook, though this area

also contains some older properties, while a scattering of looser development follows the course of Gransden Brook to the south.

- 5.3 The landscape character of the surrounding area comprises gently undulating arable farmland with mostly large fields and low trimmed hedgerows. Occasional medium to large size ancient woodlands provide a distinctive feature and church towers (such as Little Gransden) and spires (such as Great Gransden to the north) are key landmarks. The rolling nature of the landscape is in marked contrast to the essentially flat, open landscape that characterises so much of South Cambridgeshire.

6.0 ARCHAEOLOGY

- 6.1 There are no scheduled archaeological sites within (or nearby) the proposed Little Gransden Conservation Area. The only earthworks identified in the RCHM volume on West Cambridgeshire are cultivation remains in the form of 'ridge and furrow' patterning surviving in old enclosures on either side of the Main Road south of the village core. Traces of open-field type 'ridge and furrow' can be seen on aerial photographs, especially southeast of the village, with curving furlongs abutting against each other. Straight 'ridge and furrow' in rectangular fields (eg east of Rose Farm) and curved 'ridge and furrow' in small fields with curving boundaries are also traceable. The ridges are 90 – 200 metres in length, 7 – 10 metres wide and 200 – 300 mm high.

7.0 TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

Church Street

- 7.1 Church Street is a narrow, dead-end, rural



Almshouses at 2-8 Church St

lane with wide grass verges and enclosed by hedges and a number of mature trees. The first buildings on the north-west side of Church Street are Nos 2-8 (map:A), a range of 'Arts and Crafts' style Almshouses that were built in 1903. These Almshouses are currently not listed, but are of considerable local interest and remain largely unaltered. The almshouses are set back from the road, in communal grounds and are single storey with white painted rendered walls under plain tiled roofs surmounted by tall, brick stacks. The windows have dressed sandstone mullions and surrounds, a detail that is repeated on a series of projecting bay windows, which also incorporate stone transoms.



Nos 14-16 Church Street

7.2 Continuing down the north-west side of Church Street are Nos 14 and 16 (map:1), a pair of Grade II Listed cottages that are possibly late medieval and with a 1676 date stone on the central chimney stack. The cottages originally comprised a single dwelling (probably with a baffle entry) that was later sub-divided, and are timber framed and rendered under a longstraw thatch roof. They are 1½ storey with the upper floor windows under eyebrow dormers in the thatch. These cottages are aligned parallel to the road with short front gardens.

7.3 Nos 18 and 20 Church Street (map:2) are a further pair of Grade II Listed cottages. These date from c 1750 and are again timber framed and rendered under longstraw thatch roofs. The cottages are two storied and are a mirrored pair. The central brick stack has a projecting brick entablature and a panel to the base with the date 1856 and the initials TWW.



Nos 18-20 Church Street



No 22 Church Street

7.4 No. 22 Church Street (map:3) is a detached Grade II Listed cottage set in a large plot that has recently undergone significant refurbishment. The two-storey cottage is timber framed and rendered under a thatched roof of longstraw and with a dark stained weatherboarded range to the north. The house is sited adjacent to No 20, but is set further back off the road, and there is a significant open area between No 22 and No 30 which affords views out the fields beyond. Currently a temporary mobile home is sited in the space.



View along Church Street

7.5 No. 30 Church Street is a single storey property with attic rooms lit by dormer windows that has been much extended in C20, with rendered walls set under plain tiled roofs.

7.6 No 34 Church Street, together with the Willow Tree Stud beyond, are of no particular architectural interest and lie outside the boundaries of the proposed Conservation Area. The tarmac surface ends at Willow Tree Stud, and the lane becomes a track (bridleway).



The Old Rectory

7.7 The first building on the south-east side of Church Street is No 1, The Old Rectory, which is Grade II Listed (map:4). The dwelling is set above the road and is largely hidden from view, though is more visible from Church Walk. At the core of The Old Rectory is a C16 brick house that probably had its principal elevations facing north. In c 1840 the house was extended and the principal elevation changed to the west side, within an asymmetrical composition of Tudor Gothic style. The walls are rendered under roofs of slate and plain tiles.

7.8 Adjacent to The Old Rectory (but separated by a footpath leading to Church Walk) is the parish church of St Peter and St Paul (map:5). The church is Grade II* Listed and is the most important historic building within the proposed Conservation Area. The church dates from the mid C13 and C14, with a 4-stage west tower of C14-C15. The church is built of carstone, rubble and fieldstone with clunch and limestone dressings under a plain tile and Welsh slate roof. The church is sited within a substantial churchyard that is elevated above the road and with the church set at 45 degrees to the road.



The Church of St Peter and St Paul



The Church of St Peter and St Paul



No 35 Church Street



No 37 Church Street

7.9 The final pair of dwellings on the south-east side of Church Lane are Nos 35 and 37 (map:6). This pair of late C16 cottages is separated from the church by open fields through which a footpath gives access to the lane beyond. These cottages are Grade II Listed, and are built of timber frame with a render finish. No 35 is a two-storey cottage under an asbestos cement slate roof, while No 37 is single storey with attic rooms contained within the roof, which is part reed-thatched and part concrete pantile to a wing at the rear. The cottages are aligned parallel to the road, but are set back some distance from it.

Church Walk



No 2 Church Walk

7.10 There is only one dwelling on the north-east side of Church Walk (No.2), a modest detached late Victorian/Edwardian dwelling set in large grounds and overlooking Main Road (map:B). The house is built of gault brick and currently has interlocking concrete tiles to its roof, but would originally have been covered in Welsh slate.



No 3 (Pipers Cottage)



*Nos 15 & 17
(Rectory Cottages) Church Walk*

7.11 Along the south-west side of Church Walk is a varied range of dwellings. No 1 and No 11 are late C20 bungalows with brickwork walls under concrete tiled roofs. The latter is also called 'The Old School House' indicating the original use for this site, and replaces a T-shaped building of red brick with 'Cambridgeshire white' brick dressings under a slated roof built in 1845. The School was an open hall of three bays while the School House was a two storied cross wing to the school with a central chimney between the two. No. 3 (Pipers Cottage, map:C) is an older cottage set gable onto the road, with rendered walls under a part thatch and part concrete plain tile roof. No 7 is a detached, Victorian, two-storey house, built of red brick with gault brick quoins and detailing around the openings under a slate roof. Nos 15 & 17 (Rectory Cottages) are a pair of mirror image, two storey Victorian cottages set back from the road and built of gault brick under a slate roof. No 7, 15 and 17 have now all lost their original sash windows.

Main Road

7.12 Although Main Road is the through route through the village, there are only a few properties along it that fall within the

boundaries of the proposed Conservation Area. There are a number of fields fronting onto the road and, north of the junction with Primrose Hill, the road is enclosed by trees that arch over to form a 'green tunnel'.



No 60 Main Road

7.13 No 60 Main Road (Chestnut House) lies at the southern end of the proposed Conservation Area, opposite the junction to Church Walk, and comprises a detached timber framed dwelling dating from the late C17 and Grade II Listed (map:7). The property is single storey with attic rooms under a reed-thatch roof, with one eyebrow dormer window on the south side. The dwelling is set gable onto the road and has roughcast render over the timber frame, though currently the frame to the south-west corner is exposed for repairs/underpinning.

7.14 No 80 Main Road is located opposite the junction to Church Street and comprises a two storey Victorian cottage with rendered walls under slate roofs. The property has recently been extended and has blank elevations facing the road.



Barns on Main Road

7.15 Opposite No 80 is a range of thatched and weatherboarded farm buildings, with brick plinths (map:D). These buildings form an important feature in this part of the proposed Conservation Area. They are not listed in their own right, but lie within the curtilage of the Old Rectory and are therefore curtilage listed.



Nos 82 & 84 Main Road

7.16 No 82 and 84 Main Road are a pair of cottages that once formed a single C17 dwelling and are Grade II Listed (map:8). The cottages are two storey and timber framed with a roughcast render finish all under a steeply pitched roof that is now covered in asbestos cement slates. No 84 is contained in a cross wing to original house that has also been extended at the south-east end (No 82) under a slate roof.

Primrose Hill

7.17 Primrose Hill climbs steeply away from its junction with Main Road before levelling out, where the road is fronted by mid C20 dwellings. Only the first section of Primrose Hill lies within the proposed Conservation Area, and this includes a substantial horse chestnut tree on the traffic island at the junction with Main Road.



No. 1 Primrose Hill (Hill House)

7.18 No. 1 Primrose Hill (Hill House, map:9) is sited above the road on its north side and is aligned parallel with it. It comprises a two-storey timber framed cottage under a longstraw thatch roof, with part of the timber frame exposed at first floor level. The house is Grade II Listed and dates from the late C18.



No. 3 Primrose Hill

7.19 No. 3 Primrose Hill (map:E) is a two-storey, timber-framed cottage set gable-on to the road, with rendered walls under a Welsh slate roof with a ridge stack, and timber casement windows.



No 6 Primrose Hill (The Nook)

7.20 No. 6 Primrose Hill (The Nook, map:10) is sited on a curve in the road at the top of the short hill, facing back down to Main Road. It is a two-storey timber-framed cottage with render walls under steeply pitched roofs covered in clay pantiles, but were probably

once thatched. The property is Grade II Listed and dates from late C18 – early C19.

The Leys



The Leys (No.2 is on the left)

7.21 The Leys is a charming, narrow, sunken lane set between high hedgerows that leads off Church Walk. There is only one dwelling along The Leys that lies within the boundaries of the proposed Conservation Area (No 2), which comprises a late C20 brick bungalow that is largely hidden behind the mature hedge. The other two dwellings on this lane (Nos 9 and 15) lie outside of the boundaries of the proposed Conservation Area.

8.0 KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- 8.1 Little Gransden is a loose knit village that extends for some significant distance south along the B 1045. Even at its centre around the church open fields are still interspersed with the cottages. The brook and gently undulating, farmland landscape are key components to the setting of the village.
- 8.2 Aside from the church, no building in the village exceeds two storeys and many are only 1½ storey. Materials are generally thatch and render on the older cottages, giving way to slate and gault brick in the 19th century. The traditional cottages have wide frontages and a narrow plan depth.
- 8.3 Roads are generally narrow, with informal grass verges, a welcome absence of street lighting and only limited modern street furniture.

9.0 THE BOUNDARIES TO THE CONSERVATION AREA

- 9.1 The proposed Conservation Area is centred on the church. To the north it extends to

include pastureland that forms an important separation between the villages of Great and Little Gransden and from which there are fine views north to Great Gransden church and south, back to Little Gransden church. To the east it includes the first few, older properties along Primrose Hill, while to the southeast it extends as far as No. 60 Main Road. To the west and southwest it includes all the listed properties along Church Street and also the important fields immediately south of the church.

10.0 ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- 10.1 The most visible enhancement of the conservation area would be the removal of the electricity poles along Church Street, together with the pole mounted transformers in the fields to the south of the church and in the Leys. In the event that the cables are to be re-routed underground, care will need to be taken to ensure that roots to trees and hedges are not damaged and that verges are properly re-instated.
- 10.2 Church Street would be further enhanced by the removal of the mobile home at No. 22, while Main Road will be improved once the ongoing works to No 60 (which appear to have been stalled for at least a year) are completed.
- 10.3 There are three listed cottages that once would have had thatched roofs but now have roofs of asbestos cement slates (82/84 Main Road and 35 Church Street). These would be enhanced if they were re-roofed in a more sympathetic material, preferably involving a return to thatch or alternatively using Welsh slate or clay pan-tiles.
- 10.4 The churchyard wall fronting onto Church Lane is in a poor state and would benefit from careful and sympathetic repairs that would also visually enhance the street scene.
- 10.5 The Chequers Public House lies immediately outside the boundaries of the proposed Conservation Area, but the building is very visible in the street scene. The replacement windows to this building are not of a sympathetic design and do not reflect the traditional form of windows that would have been present. Since this building is so prominently sited, the adjacent conservation area would be enhanced if these windows were replaced in a more traditional design.

- 10.6 The character of the proposed Conservation

Area is greatly enhanced by established, mature planting. Unlike buildings, trees and hedgerows are living organisms and consequently have a finite life. It is therefore vital that timely new planting is undertaken when necessary. Such new planting should reflect the essentially native rural species generally found and avoid the use of small ornamental varieties or imported varieties such as leylandii.

- 10.7 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 POLICIES TO PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA

- 11.1 These policies should be read in conjunction with those in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (adopted February 2004). Summaries of the relevant policies are provided in Appendix A, but it is advisable to consult the Local Plan itself.
- 11.2 Opportunities for new dwellings within the boundaries of the proposed Conservation Area will be very limited (and possibly restricted to the replacement of existing dwellings that are of no architectural interest). In considering the design of new or replacement buildings, or extensions to existing ones, the Council will take into account the impact of proposals 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 not exceed two-storeys in height (note, in most circumstances this would also preclude attic rooms to two storey dwellings). Roofs should be modestly

pitched (ie 30-35 degree) in slate or clay pan-tile, or more steeply pitched in plain-tile or thatch. Dormers are not a feature of the proposed Conservation Area, and those that are present are restricted to eyebrow dormers in thatch on 1½-storey dwellings. Rooflights should be limited in both size and number and be located on less visible slopes.

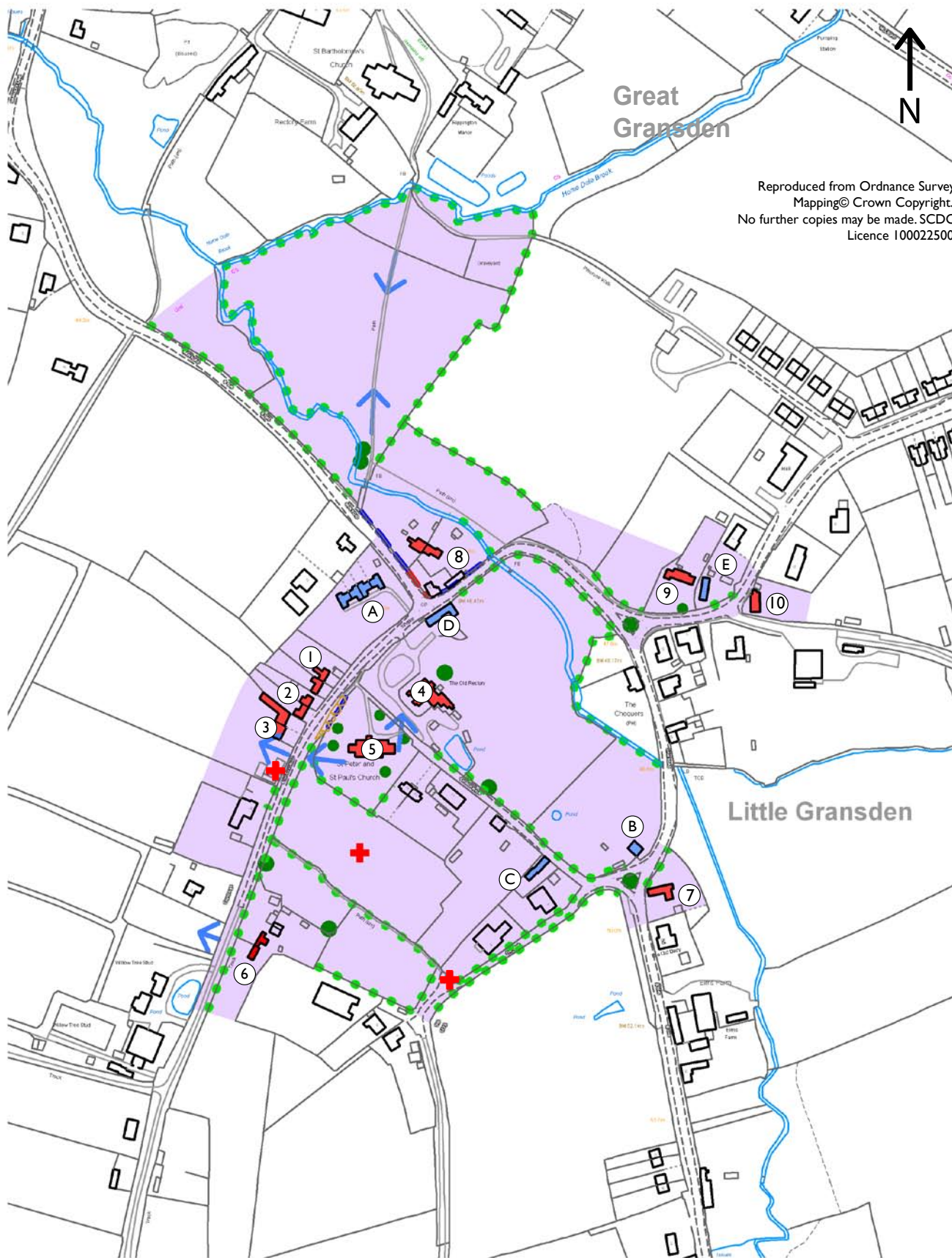
Location on the plot – new buildings should respect established building lines and extensions should adhere to the principles of subordination, so that they do not undermine the architectural interest of the main building, while also seeking to preserve existing trees and hedgerows.

Materials and colours – Little Gransden has a very limited pallet of materials as set out in Section 8 of this document. This pallet should be used as a guide for new development. In addition, stained weatherboard timber cladding may be considered appropriate for lesser structures, such as garages (reflecting the farm buildings on Main Street). Rendered walls should be painted either white or pale pastel shades, while brickwork should generally be gault clay, though some limited use of red brick may be appropriate. Modern, artificial materials (including concrete roof tiles and uPVC windows) should be resisted, together with strident paint colours.

- 11.3 Boundaries are very important to the character of the proposed Conservation Area. Positive boundaries identified on the map within this appraisal should be retained. Where new boundaries are proposed,

care should be taken to ensure they use appropriate materials (such as timber picket fences) and that overtly formal gates and walls are not considered. Planted boundaries, including those to sides and rear where they abut lanes or the wider countryside, will need to be appropriately treated so that existing vegetation of merit is retained and augmented as necessary with new native trees and hedges. Sufficient space must be allowed within site layouts to enable this planting to be implemented in the short term and retained over the longer term. Close-boarded fences to open countryside will be resisted unless they can be adequately screened with appropriate planting.

- 11.4 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. Reflective yellow backgrounds to traffic signs are not appropriate in or adjacent to Conservation Areas and should be avoided. Where required, traffic calming measures should be specifically designed to complement the village and its setting, avoiding the introduction of alien urban features or standardised, inappropriate gateways. Well-designed street furniture in suitable colours will be encouraged, while necessary, but unattractive plant, should be appropriately screened.



APPENDIX A: RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

Cambridgeshire Structure Plan (adopted October 2003)

PI/2 Protection of sites of archaeological, historical or architectural value.

P7/6 Local authorities will protect and enhance the distinctiveness of the historic built environment.

South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (adopted February 2004)

This section summarises the main Local Plan policies that are relevant to Conservation Areas.

SE10 Protected Village Amenity Areas.

HG10 The design and layout of residential schemes should be informed by the wider character and context of the local townscape and landscape.

HG12 Extensions and alterations to dwellings should be in keeping with local character.

EM6 Small scale employment in villages.

SH6 Resistance to loss of shops in villages.

CS7 Utility companies to be urged to place pipes, fibres, wire and cables underground where this would not have unacceptable environmental impacts.

CS8 Location of telecommunications installations to minimise visual impact.

CS9 Protection of village pubs and recreational facilities.

EN1 Importance of maintaining character and distinctiveness.

EN4 Protection of the historic landscape, whether or not they are statutorily designated.

EN5 Retention of trees and hedges in new developments.

EN15 Protection, preservation and enhancement of known and suspected sites of archaeological importance.

EN16 Public access to archaeological sites and records.

EN17 Building preservation notices and spot listing of buildings of archaeological or historic interest to protect unlisted buildings.

EN18 Presumption against demolition of Listed Buildings.

EN19 Recording and salvage if consent for demolition is granted.

EN20 Unsympathetic extensions to Listed Buildings.

EN21 Preservation or salvage (including public record) of fabric or features of Listed Buildings where consent for extensions or alterations is granted.

EN22 Imposition of conditions to protect the fabric and character of buildings.

EN23 Preservation of the character of roofs of Listed Buildings, in particular long straw and gault clay roofs.

EN24 Use of planning powers to secure the sound repair of Listed Buildings.

EN25 Maintenance of register of 'buildings at risk'.

EN26 Considerations to be applied when considering the conversion of Listed Buildings to new uses.

EN27 Applications for planning permission and Listed Building consent will not be considered separately. Requirement for the consideration of Listed Building applications and planning applications, including the need to consider the full effects of proposals on the building and its setting.

EN28 Requirement to submit illustrative and technical material to allow the impact of proposals affecting a Listed Building, its curtilage and wider setting.

EN30 Requirement for applications for planning permission in Conservation Areas to be accompanied by sufficient details to allow their impact to be assessed.

EN31 High quality of design, planting and materials connected with landscaping of developments in Conservation Areas.

- EN32 Controls over consent for demolition of buildings in a Conservation Area.
- EN33 Salvage of materials and pictorial record if consent for demolition in a Conservation Area is granted.
- EN34 Retention of the character, materials, features and details of unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas.
- EN35 Restrictions of permitted development rights to safeguard elements of the character of Conservation Areas.
- EN36 Control over external cladding which affect the character of Conservation Areas.
- EN37 Control over location and design of meter boxes on Listed Buildings.
- EN38 Need to retain traditional shopfronts and their details.
- EN39 Controls over design of advertisements and signs on Listed Buildings and in Conservation Areas.
- EN40 Controls over design of advertisements and outside Conservation Areas. Area of Special Control is in place.
- EN41 Coordination of planning permissions and consent for demolition or felling of trees in Conservation Areas.
- EN42 Promotion of enhancement schemes in Conservation Areas.
- EN43 Statutory undertakers and utility companies should consult and seek to agree works in Conservation Areas.

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