



LOCALLY THE VILLAGE IS KNOWN AS MINAL

MILDENHALL CONSERVATION AREA STATEMENT

June 2004

Planning Services



Development Control & Conservation



Forward Planning & Transportation



Building Control & Property Management

Shortly before the adoption of this Statement, Patricia Courtman died at the age of 82. Miss Courtman was first elected to the Mildenhall Parish Council in 1952, and became Chairman from 1967 until her death. She was also Ward Member of the Kennet District Council since its formation in 1974, and which she represented on the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust, and the Marlborough Historic Buildings Joint Committee. This short dedication acknowledges the major role that Miss Courtman played in the conservation of Mildenhall and the surrounding area.

MILDENHALL CONSERVATION AREA



The view of Mildenhall as seen by all those who pass through the village travelling on the historic route between Marlborough and Ramsbury.

The village of Mildenhall is located in the Kennet valley two miles east of Marlborough and four miles west of Ramsbury. The village which has a population of around 450, is on the east-west road, the B4192, that links Marlborough with Hungerford.

The purpose of this Statement of the Mildenhall Conservation Area is to identify and record those special qualities of the village that make up its architectural and historic character. This is important for providing a sound basis for local plan policies and development control decisions as well as for the formulation of proposals the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the area.

The Statement contains an assessment of the Conservation Area and is intended for all those with an interest in the village, or undertaking work on its buildings, landscape, streets or public spaces. By drawing attention to the distinctive features of Mildenhall it is intended that its character will be protected and enhanced for the benefit of this and future generations.

The Conservation Area was designated on the 9 May 1975. It includes the historic core of the present village centred around the church and extends eastwards as far as the 19th century former school. Much of the Conservation Area is the open land in the river valley that provides an important landscape setting to the village. The southward extension of Berrycroft is part within the Conservation Area, having been built after the area was designated.

The main characteristics of the Mildenhall Conservation Area are:

- Its location on the north bank of the River Kennet and the open views across the valley
- The influence of the flood plain.
- The route through the village
- The range of historic buildings from the 15th to 19th centuries
- The secluded church and historic buildings in Church Lane
- The distinctive former school and buildings at the eastern end of the village together with the bridge crossing the River Kennet



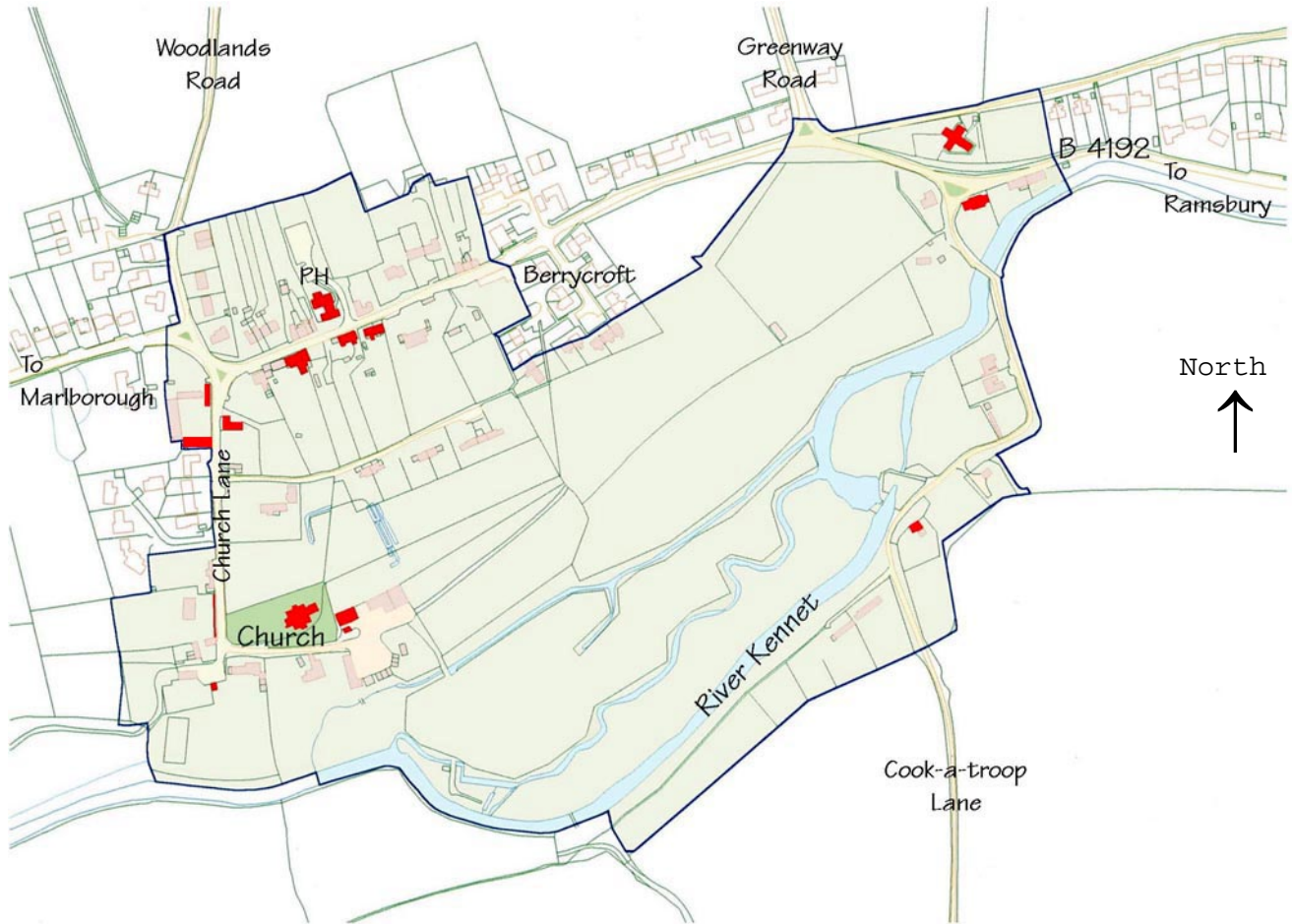
The River Kennet flowing eastwards. This section of the river is within the Conservation Area; buildings are hidden within the landscape setting.

Geology and topography

The Kennet Valley forms a distinct topographical unit which cuts through the chalk of the Marlborough Downs from Avebury in the west to Chilton Foliat at the eastern boundary of the District. The main landscape characteristics are smooth valley sides that roll gently down to a strip of flat floodplain farmland following the course of the river. The valley sides are predominantly Upper Chalk whilst alluvium and valley gravels overlie the base of the locality throughout its length.

Mildenhall is close to and predominantly on the north side of the River Kennet set roughly between the 125 and 135 metre contours.

East of Marlborough the river (including the section within the Conservation Area) is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.



Mildenhall Conservation Area showing the relationship of the historic village with the river valley. Listed buildings are shown in red. Most of the development outside the Conservation Area is 20th century. An enlarged map of the area is included on pages 6 and 7.

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Origins and development of the village

This historic account of Mildenhall is included to explain how events and individuals in the past have influenced the physical development of the village but it is not a definitive history. The significance of Mildenhall, then Cunetio, as an important Roman settlement has long been recognised. As long ago as the early 19th century archaeologists were taking a keen interest in the area around Mildenhall and there are a number of publications on the various finds that have been made in the locality.

These archaeological studies show that the locality has been inhabited since the Iron Age and that the later Roman settlement of Cunetio was located in an area that had already seen development.

The main lines of communication across southern England have traversed Wiltshire since prehistoric times with the high ground providing natural routes across the county. These routes continued in use throughout the Roman period but soon after the Roman Conquest a network of new roads was constructed across the country with London as the focus. Cunetio was on the direct line of the route between London and Bath and formed the crossing point of the route from Winchester through Salisbury and that from Chiseldon to Cirencester.



The Church of St John the Baptist – described by Nikolaus Pevsner as "a perfect example of the small village church of many periods, and, together with its Late Georgian furnishings, preserved completely".

The Roman town of Cunetio that was built at this junction was located south of the River Kennet and in the area south-east of the present village. This was a sizeable settlement and an important military station. The exact position of Roman Mildenhall was on what is known as the Black Field south east of the present settlement. At its foundation Cunetio was apparently unfortified but in the 4th century was enclosed by a stone wall with bastions. When the Romans left, the town probably survived as a small local market into Anglo Saxon times, although the market activity was also abandoned in time.

It is evident from surviving Saxon Charters that both the prehistoric trackways and the Roman roads continued in use after the departure of the Romans, although a new feature of the Saxon period was the growth of roads along river valleys. In Saxon times the site of the settlement moved to the north bank of the Kennet and there is a Saxon documentary record of an 8th century charter preserved by Glastonbury Abbey to prove its title to formerly royal land at Mildenhall. The name of the village is believed to derive from the Saxon, Mildanhald, meaning Milda's corner, or hollow.

In 804 Alhmund, Bishop of Winchester secured a site to build a new church. This seems to have been the focus for the new village with the present Church of St. John the Baptist dating from the 10th century. The present church has been described by Pevsner as "a perfect example of the small village church of many periods" and it contains an especially fine Georgian interior. The church was extensively restored in the early 19th century but fortunately much of the interior was retained.

In Domesday the village was called Mildenhalle and since then there have been many spellings of the village name with "Minal" persisting as the local pronunciation. Also in 1086 there was woodland at Mildenhall and particularly at Stitchcome on the south side of the river.



This view of the Kennet is taken from the south side of the river with the present day village in the background. Control of the river was a major influence in the growth and development of agriculture in Mildenhall.

In the late 13th and 14th centuries the Manor of Mildenhall was an important centre for sheep farming. At this time Farleigh Hungerford, in Somerset, became an important regional breeding centre for sheep supplying many of the manors in Wiltshire with ewes and lambs and receiving in return some of the fully grown stock. There were thus direct economic links between Mildenhall and the Manor of Farleigh Hungerford.

In order to support a large sheep population it was necessary to provide fodder throughout the year and Mildenhall was well placed to achieve this by exploiting a system of water meadows in the river valley. The flooding of the water meadows in spring encouraged an early crop of grass and thereby maintained a larger flock than would otherwise have been possible. The successful development of water meadows in Mildenhall was an important step in the expansion of agricultural activity and creation of wealth in the village. It also was an excellent method of creating meadowland from marsh and arable.

The road through Mildenhall to Bath was recorded in 1675 on Ogilby's map as one of the main east-west routes through this part of Wiltshire, the other being south of the river through Savernake. The route through Mildenhall was known as the Plow Way and sometimes referred to as Ramsbury Narrow Way. The route through Savernake was turnpiked in 1774 and thereafter became the favoured main road, therefore bypassing Mildenhall.



Roman's Halt, one of the oldest buildings in the village was originally three cottages and dates from the 16th century. The long straw thatch roof covering is the local tradition

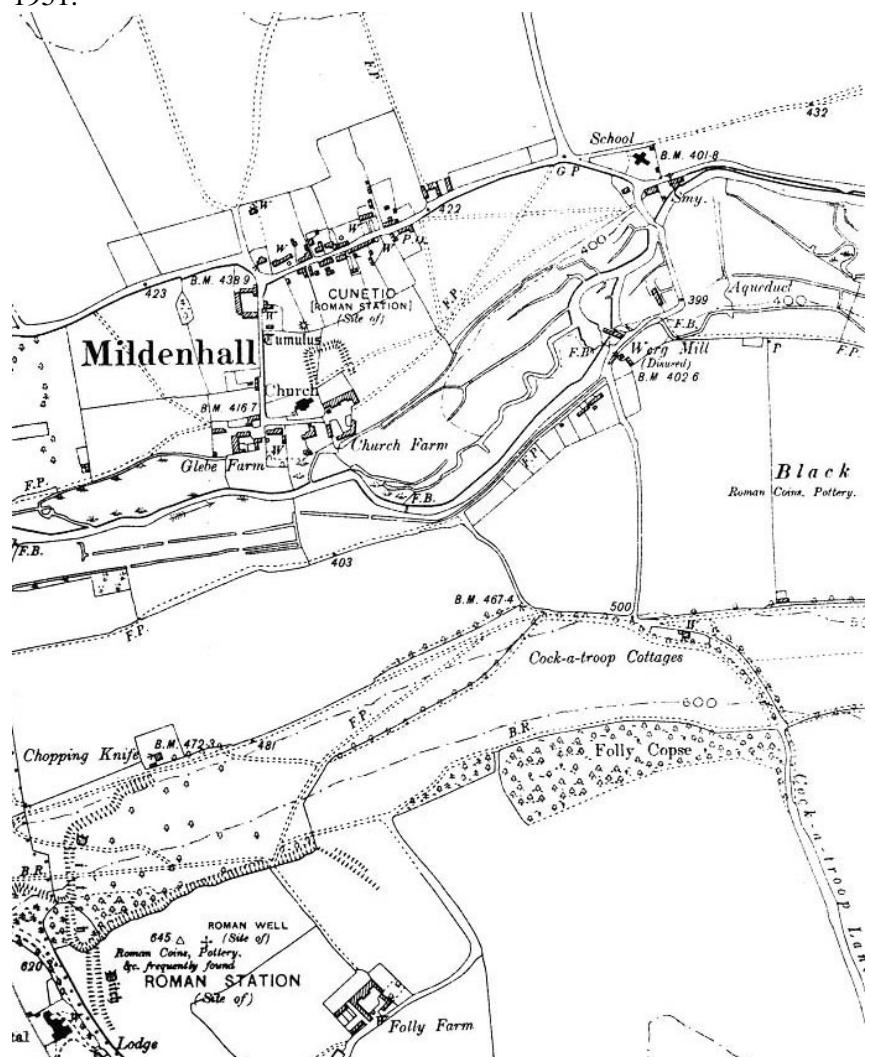
Cock-a-troop lane, the footpath that leads south up the hill from Cunetio, was probably the start of the road to Old Sarum and the curious name is taken from Crokerer-troupe or potters settlement thus indicating a pottery industry in the area in the Saxon or medieval period. North of the river is the Marlborough to Ramsbury road and south of the river the road from Marlborough to Stitchcombe. These two roads were probably linked by a bridge north of Werg Mill in the late 16th century. There was also a bridge at Stitchcombe in the early 18th century.

The development of the present village of Mildenhall spread north from Mildenhall church along the lane leading to the crossroads with the Marlborough-Ramsbury road. The oldest houses in the village, some of which are timber framed and thatched lie along this lane and close to the church. Church Farm and Glebe House south of the church, and cottages to the west and north date from the 17th and early 18th centuries.

In the 18th century the village extended east of the crossroads towards Ramsbury and this became the principal street. 18th century buildings that survive here include Hawthorn Cottage and Home Farm. Many of the roadside cottages date from the 19th century, and some of these were undoubtedly constructed in the 1860s when new building attracted additional residents to the village. In 1801 the population of Mildenhall was 376; this grew to a peak of 501 in 1871 before declining to 414 in 1951.



These cottages in the centre of Mildenhall represent 17th century development that spread north and eastwards from the Church. Many of the buildings in the Conservation Area are brick and thatch.



Mildenhall in 1901 showing the similarity with the village as found today. Almost all of the buildings along the east / west route on the north side of the river shown on this map are within the Conservation Area.



The few examples of 18th century building found in the village are of high quality as can be seen here at Hawthorn Cottage. This view looking eastwards along the main road also shows the importance of walls hedges and chimney-stacks within the street scene.

A Rectory, demolished in the mid 19th century and replacing a former 17th century rectory, stood to the west of the church and the gatepiers that marked the entrance to its grounds still survive. A farmhouse, once located just to the north of the former Rectory, was also demolished although some of the farm buildings remain.

Formal education in the village began in the early 19th century and was firmly established following the construction of the Protestant pre-school of 1824, a bequest from a former Rector Charles Francis. This cruciform plan stone building, designed by Robert Abraham, is a particular feature of the eastern end of the village.

20th century development in Mildenhall was considerable, although most of this is outside the Conservation Area. As well as some infill development within the Conservation Area there has been extensive building beyond, along the Marlborough to Ramsbury Road. Towards the end of the 20th century a small estate of 21 bungalows and houses known as Berrycroft was built opposite the village hall. Other 20th century development within the Conservation Area includes the Rectory just north of the church and Church Farm Cottages as well as new dwellings on the east side of Woodlands Road.

Changes in the 20th century were not restricted to new buildings and many of the historic buildings in the village have been altered and extended particularly within the last twenty years. In common with national trends farm employment and activity has declined.

Archaeological significance

The main area of archaeological interest is the site of the Iron Age settlement and Roman town of Cunetio to the south east of the present village on the south bank of the River Kennet and at the foot of the steep valley escarpment.

Partial excavation, geophysics and aerial photography have all added to the understanding of the town and have shown that the site was occupied from the 1st century onwards. The town was surrounded by a double ditched enclosure and had four probable entrances. Some twenty buildings have been recorded including a large south facing courtyard building at the centre of the town. This building had at least twenty rooms and, given its location and size, may have functioned as a "mansio" or Roman posting station where Roman officials and travellers could have stayed.

Further Romano-British discoveries have been made on the north bank of the River and 1st - 4th century pottery sherds and a fragment of flue tile were found in 1955 during work on a pipeline. A single prehistoric find has been discovered in the village west of "West Trees", where a Neolithic core was discovered in a pit of Roman date. There are also other prehistoric finds from Mildenhall, some of them quite important.

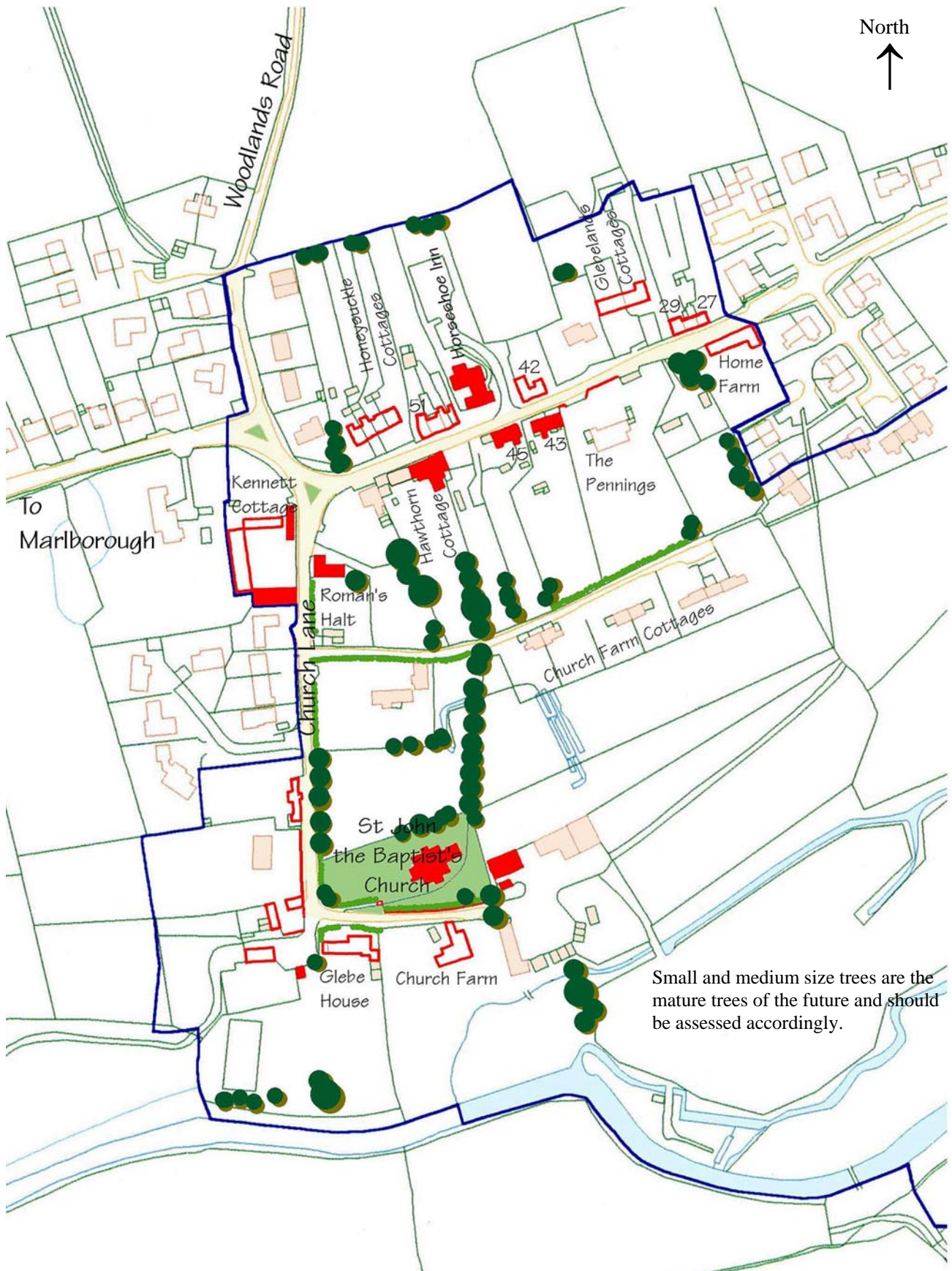


At one time the road through Mildenhall was part of the main route from London to Bath but use declined when the route south of the river was turnpiked in 1774.

The virginia creeper covered wall in front of Pennings is the remains of a terrace of cottages known as The Drunge. Evidence of doors and windows can still be seen.

Mildenhall is recorded as Mildanhald in AD 803-5 and an iron spearhead discovered in the garden of 29 Mildenhall may be of Saxon origin. Other Saxon Finds have also been recorded. Several undated features have been noted from aerial photography including a bowl barrow, a circular feature and a square earthwork north-east of the church, which may be medieval in date. This later feature is a Scheduled Ancient Monument as is the site of the former Roman town.

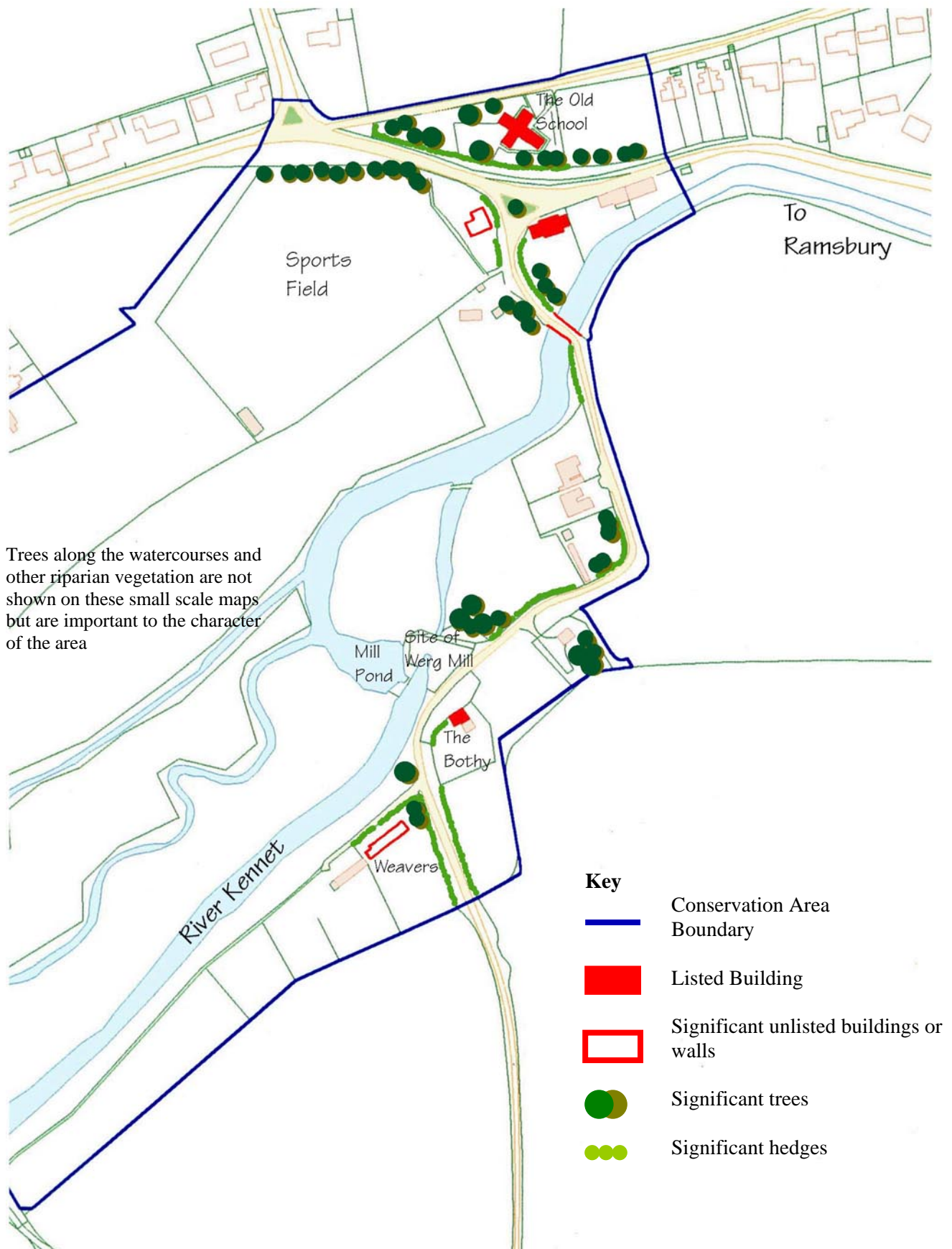
Mildenhall Conservation Area - west



Details of listed buildings shown on this map are correct at the date of publication but can change.
For up-to-date information it is advisable to check with the District Council.

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Mildenhall Conservation Area - east



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The base map used in this report is the latest available – recent changes within the village may not be shown.



Historic buildings usually form the core of Conservation Areas but the settings of the buildings and views between are essential components of village character as seen here between numbers 44 and 45.



Trees and hedges mark the western approach to the Conservation Area and are important to its setting. Changes in the road alignment create interesting views and bring certain buildings into prominence along the route.



The character of an area depends not just on buildings but on uses. The Horseshoe Inn is both an attractive building and an important centre of activity.

Architectural and historic character

The Mildenhall Conservation Area covers a wide area including the historic village and the landscape setting as far as the southern bank of the River Kennet. The character is not consistent across the area but varies according to location within the framework of the village. Much of the Conservation Area is the open river valley.

The most conspicuous part of the Conservation Area is the main core of the village where development has taken place on both sides of the Marlborough to Ramsbury road. Church Lane has a quite different character being lined with trees, hedges and a long brick wall giving a sense of seclusion and enclosure. At the bottom of the lane is the Church of St. John the Baptist and just to the east is Church Farm.

At the eastern end of the Conservation Area is a small group of buildings surrounding the junction where the road to Werg crosses the river. On the south side of the river is a small group of houses originally centred on Werg Mill but much altered. The group now includes two late 20th century bungalows and further west a 18th - 19th century buildings on the lane that soon turns into a footpath to Elcot, called Ghost Lane. The remainder of the Conservation Area consists of open riparian land on both sides of the River Kennet.

The approach to Mildenhall from the west is marked by late 20th century development. On the north side of the road is a group of detached houses fronting the road. On the south is a single dwelling, West Trees, with a large garden where the landscape and vegetation provide an attractive setting to the village. The Conservation Area starts at the junction with Woodlands Road. Here the main route swings sharp right and then left leading on through the village towards Ramsbury. As the timber frame elevations and thatch roof of Roman's Halt come into view it is immediately apparent that this is an area of historic development.

From the Church Lane junction the buildings on either side of the main road are built to an irregular pattern and include houses from differing centuries and consequently of differing styles. On the south side of the road and close to the carriageway are 44, 45 and 46 Mildenhall dating from the 17th century and constructed of flint, timber frame and brick. These cottages of one storey plus attic are thatched.

The mid-18th century Hawthorn Cottage, also on the south side and built close to the road is an attractive building of red brick, small-pane sash windows and plain clay tile roof. The brick and thatch Horseshoe Inn of late 18th / early 19th century date occupies a central location and its significance is emphasised by the slight rise in level in front of the building.

This part of the village includes mostly 19th century building. Numbers 28-29 are modest cottages in brick and thatch and are probably early 19th century. This group, and numbers 30 -31, front directly onto the road and with the slightly later brick and slate Honeysuckle Cottages set back.

The effect of development here is to create the appearance of a close-knit village street. Further east there is more space around the buildings and the trees and hedges become more evident.



The sense of enclosure of Church Lane derives from the buildings, trees and hedges and particularly the boundary wall to the former Rectory. The wall, gates and gatepiers are listed.

Home Farm, on the edge of the Conservation Area, is again built close to the road. Reference to the plan of 1900 shows that a number of buildings on the south side of the street have been demolished. Thus The Pennings, which is a 20th century farmhouse in a simplified Arts and Crafts style is undoubtedly on the site of earlier development. This whole part of Mildenhall has a varied character related to the contrasting styles of buildings that line the road, these being from the 17th to the 20th century

Church Lane, running south from the main road, falls towards the river and the character here is quite different. The lane is narrow with limited traffic and clearly not a through route. It provides access to surrounding properties and its character is determined by the trees and hedges, gardens and boundaries on both sides. Once again there is clear evidence of historic development with the 17th century Kennet Cottage and 16th century Romans Halt, which until the 1960's was three cottages then known as Romans Hall. The buildings and layout of Home Farm Yard are important components of this part of Church Lane.



It should never be assumed that unlisted buildings are unimportant in contributing to the character of the Conservation Area. Glebe House is one of a number of attractive unlisted historic buildings in the village.

Another important element in Church Lane is the listed wall and gatepiers to the former Rectory. At the bottom of the lane is the Church of St. John the Baptist which is a building of considerable quality. The origins of the church go back to the 10th and 12th centuries and with a major restoration of 1876. Its quality lies not just in its construction but also in its setting. The Georgian interior of the building is acknowledged as of special importance and frequently quoted as a fine example by architectural historians.

The 19th century Glebe House, originally two or three cottages, is an attractive building in brick and thatch and although unlisted is certainly of architectural and historic interest. Church Farmhouse, also unlisted, is another attractive building and the whole of this area has a distinctly rural feel. The farmyard of Church Farm is utilitarian although there is a 19th century timber framed and thatched granary on staddlestones standing in the north-west corner and, just beyond, a large timber framed and thatched former piggery, both visible from the churchyard.

Back to the main road and from the Village Hall eastwards the road is lined with 20th century housing all of which is outside the designated Conservation Area. Greenway Road running north, where the red telephone kiosk sits at the junction, follows the Roman Road to Cirencester.



Just north of the river bridge on the eastern side of the Conservation Area this view of the lane emphasises the rural character of much of the village. Timber fencing can be incongruous and needs to be used sparingly.

The former Church School, now a private house, is a distinctive building but is partially hidden behind hedges and trees. It is in an elevated position above the road and it is the high bank and the vegetation that are the most visible in the street scene. The road junction provides the opportunity for tree and shrub planting and landscape features are conspicuous. Fisherman's House (formerly The Poplars), is a good example of early 19th century architecture with pleasing proportions. Its position at the junction with views from both sides makes it an especially prominent building.

Approaching from the east the main road is lined for a considerable way with 20th century ribbon development. The Conservation Area boundary starts at Forge Cottages, the location of the former Smithy, and where the lane turns to Werg. The lane south is narrow and twists sharply over the river bridge to drop onto the floodplain.



Ghost Lane south of the river runs westwards past Weavers and later becomes a footpath to Elcot. The unmade track with wide verges, hedges and trees creates a particularly attractive rural scene.

Alongside this part of the river close to the former Werg Mill can be seen the various features that control or once controlled the flow of water. Werg Mill House was destroyed by fire some 20/30 years ago.

Views across the river are interrupted by a pair of late 20th century bungalows but as the road passes the site of Werg Mill The Bothy comes into sight. The sarsen stone, brick and thatch of The Bothy create an impression that the cottage has been here for a long time but it is a 1985 residential conversion of a former cart shed and outbuilding. The green lane on the south bank of the river past Weavers Cottage and Kingfisher Cottage soon turns into a narrow footpath that provides access eventually to Elcot.

The various parts of the Conservation Area have been described from public highways and footpaths but it is necessary to follow the tracks and footpaths across the river valley to fully appreciate the character of the area. This provides further evidence of the links between the riverside location of Mildenhall and its historic development. Also important are the long views from the southern hillslope where the landscape setting of the setting of the village can best be appreciated.

Building materials and details

With the exception of churches and buildings of high status, early buildings utilised the locally available materials. This gives buildings of particular periods an identifiable architecture and also creates a consistency that can be seen throughout the area.

The earliest building in Mildenhall is the Church of St. John the Baptist built of rendered flint with limestone ashlar dressings. This demonstrates the importance of the building and the care and attention that went into its construction.



There is limited use of flint and sarsen stone in Mildenhall but the predominant building material is the local mellow brick, here used as infill to a 17th century timber frame. The thatch is combed wheat reed but would undoubtedly have once been long straw.

Stone is little used elsewhere in the village but can be seen at Number 43 Mildenhall which is one of the 17th century cottages. Other 16th and 17th century buildings are Romans Halt, Kennett Cottage and Numbers 44, 45 and 46. These buildings would originally have been constructed of timber frame with rendered panel infill but have been altered to include the use of brick, either as infill or as encasing walls. All of these buildings are thatched and Romans Halt, which has recently been rethatched, is an attractive example of the use of long straw. The other cottages are thatched in the combed wheat reed style.

Windows and doors in these early properties are timber, the doors are generally painted timber boarding and the windows 19th century style two-light timber casements, either small paned or with single horizontal glazing bars. Brick chimney-stacks, some decorative, are important features.



The simple door and window detailing at Kennett Cottage is typical of the period although windows are probably 19th century replacements. Traditional railings wherever found are always worth retaining.

Hawthorn Cottage, which dates from the mid-18th century, is constructed of red brick with a plain clay tile roof. The brickwork, built in Flemish bond, uses burnt headers to make patterns and this is a feature found also in later work. Windows are painted timber double-hung sash and the front door a painted timber six-panel design. These are the traditional features of 18th century building, although interestingly the Horseshoe Inn, which may be late 18th century but could be early 19th century, has two and three-light timber casement windows.



Fisherman's House is prominent because of its position on the outside of the bend. Such buildings make a major contribution to the appearance and character of the village.

The building style of the 18th century continued into the 19th century and this is especially evident at Fisherman's House at the eastern end of the Conservation Area. This building, which dates around 1820, has a similar brick pattern to the 18th century work of Hawthorn Cottage and shares the same features of double-hung sash windows and panelled door. The particular attraction of Fisherman's House is in its overall proportion and unaltered exterior, although unfortunately the brickwork has been repointed. Rear dormers are recent additions.

Just south of the river is a section of sarsen walling that now forms part of The Bothy. Here the stones are relatively large and the building has been altered in recent years from its previous agricultural use to a dwelling. The details and materials used follow 19th century precedents.

Later 19th century buildings and early 20th century buildings in Mildenhall are built of the local mellow brick and have Welsh slate or tiled roofs.



Church Farm is another interesting unlisted building that retains many of its original features. Gates such as these create local distinctiveness.

Historic buildings within the Conservation Area are essential components of village character but details such as walls, gates and fencing are also important. The wall on the west side of Church Lane is notable because it is a reminder of earlier development and also forms a key element in the street scene. Here the rusticated gatepiers and iron gates identify the entrance to the former Rectory. The Lych gate and the clipped hedges to the churchyard provide an attractive setting to the Church.

Elsewhere features such as the hanging sign at the Horseshoe Inn, the brick abutments to the river bridge and the parish notice board at the eastern end of the village reading Minal create local identity. This applies also to the red telephone kiosk. Kerbs along the main road in the village are recent additions and identify this as a busy through route. Elsewhere the softer edges of road verges and hedges are part of the rural character.

Landscape setting and the contribution made by green spaces and trees

The Conservation Area is predominantly agricultural and is set in the water meadows on the valley floor of the Kennet Valley Landscape Character Area. Views out are to chalk downland on either side of the valley but particularly to the south. The remnant water meadows and River Kennet, which is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, are dominant features of the Conservation Area, the whole of which falls within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



The contribution made by green spaces and trees varies according to changes in weather conditions and the seasons. Trees and hedges are important in Mildenhall throughout the whole of the river valley.

Viewed from the hills to the south Mildenhall is seen nestling amongst a belt of broadleaf trees and it is from here that the setting of the village is most obvious. Hedges and trees are integral to the character of Church Lane and the yews in the churchyard are of particular importance. There is an important group of beech trees on the southern side of the road near Home Farm and Hawthorn Cottage. The playing field to the east is an integral part of the village setting.

At the top of Church Lane is a small traffic island which contains a poorly pollarded sycamore tree.



The former shop is a building typical of the 1960's when considerations of "fitting in" were largely ignored. Redevelopment of this site needs to be assessed with particular regard for its context.

Problems and eyesores

The least attractive building within the Conservation Area is the former shop which is unoccupied and appears to have been so for some time. The design of the building bears no relationship to its surroundings and detracts from the quality of nearby listed buildings. Opposite Home Farm the centre terrace cottage thatch (no:28) is badly decayed and the building is protected by a tarpaulin.

Within the river valley various boundaries are utilitarian and because of the open character of the area are prominent. This applies also to the farmyard at Church Farm where various outbuildings have appeared in a haphazard fashion. At the eastern end of the Conservation Area the site of Werg Garden with its prominent sheds is unattractive. On the south side of the river are a number of structures and areas which appear unkempt.

Not all of the redundant agricultural buildings at Church Farm and within the Conservation Area are of interest. The thatched Granary and barn on the north side do have a certain quality and are important in their relationship to the church but elsewhere the farmyard buildings are of a later date and of no architectural interest. The surface area of the farmyard is sizeable and prominent.

The playing field north of the river is an integral part of the river valley and important to the setting of the village. It also provides a valuable amenity. The open views mean that the sheds are conspicuous. The low-lying land is prone to flooding.



Wherever possible it is better to tackle problems before they become acute. Careful maintenance of historic features is always preferable to complete replacement

Preservation and enhancement

Preservation and enhancement of the character of the Conservation Area depends on all who have an interest in Mildenhall either as owners, occupiers, the District and Parish Councils and other service providers. Owners and occupiers of land and buildings have the ability to enhance the area through their direct activities, some of which may require planning permission or listed building or conservation area consent.

The District Council is responsible for planning control, and preservation of the character of the Conservation Area is a statutory duty. Work undertaken by those providing electricity and telephone supplies can affect the quality of the environment as can works carried out within the highway.

Preservation of existing character

It is the aim of the District Council that the character and appearance of the Mildenhall Conservation Area should be preserved and there are various ways in which this can be achieved. The following list is not exhaustive but is intended as a guide to the type of work that would contribute to maintaining the quality of the village.

Action by the District Council:

- Applications for planning permission and conservation area consent to be assessed with reference to this character appraisal.
- Advice to be made available to owners of historic buildings, listed and unlisted, to encourage good standards of maintenance and repair and the retention of original materials and details.



This photograph taken in September 2002 shows long straw re-thatching in progress at Romans Halt. At one time long straw would have been the tradition and its retention or re-introduction is District Council policy. Many thatch roof coverings in the village are combed wheat reed.



Conservation is not about preventing change but ensuring that those changes that do take place are done with care. The Bothy gives the appearance of being part of the village for many years – it is however a late 20th Century conversion of a former cart-shed.

- Contact to be maintained with the County Council as Highway Authority concerning works within the Conservation Area.
- Proposals for tree and hedge planting to be encouraged especially where sites can be identified that will allow trees to grow to maturity.

Action by owners:

- Look carefully at desired changes to buildings and surroundings and always view the proposal in its context. Where construction work is involved take particular care in the choice of materials.
- Repair rather than replace original features: where undertaking alterations to doors and windows on traditional buildings copy original styles and details.
- If proposing extending a building consider this as complementary to the existing and design in keeping.
- Consider the long-term maintenance of trees, shrubs and hedges and where appropriate identify sites for replacement tree planting.
- Avoid the introduction evergreen hedges, trees or modern fencing in prominent positions.

Enhancement



The distinctive outline of the former school with the Parish Council notice board reading "Minal" in the foreground.

Buildings become more prominent in the winter months and can often be almost completely hidden when the trees are in leaf. The effects of any works in the village should take into account the changing seasons.

Where areas or features in the Mildenhall Conservation Area are out of keeping with the character of the village it will be desirable to seek improvements or undertake replacements. Any such changes need to be designed to recognise the intrinsic character of Mildenhall using materials and details that fit the rural scene. Sites where there is potential to enhance the area include:

- The former shop next to Hawthorn Cottage
- The area between the river / mill stream and the road to the south in the vicinity of the pumping station
- The farmyard of Church Farm
- The road junction, including the island, at the top of Church Lane

The landscape setting is particularly important to the character of Mildenhall and its enhancement should be a priority as follows:-

- Retain and manage areas of valley floor permanent pasture, wet grassland and meadows, including riparian vegetation. Discourage further ploughing and field enlargement.
- Encourage traditional practices of willow pollarding and ditch management
- Introduce new watercourse tree planting and groups and lines of riparian species such as willow on the valley floor
- Retain the tranquil, intimate and unspoilt qualities of the river corridor and improve the landscape structure and management on the fringes of the settlement particularly along the main route through the village and in the area of the playing field
- Encourage the repair, replanting and extension of the hedgerow network in areas where there is currently a weak hedgerow structure
- Reinststate and restore wet meadows, wetland and riverine habitat
- Encourage the management of river corridor woodland and trees to maximise landscape and wildlife value.

The list identifies the scope for improvement but timescales are not determined. The District Council will give consideration to encouraging implementation when resources permit.



Changes to farming practices have had the most noticeable effect on village character in recent years. New uses are frequently sought for traditional farm buildings or there may be pressure to demolish. Traditional buildings can be successfully adapted to other non-residential uses although conversion to dwellings is much more problematical.



The simple form of Kennett Cottage is maintained with a single storey extension to the side. Over-extension of small-scale vernacular buildings is one of the pressures of villages in Kennet District but needs to be resisted if character and appearance are to be maintained.

Areas of potential change

It is evident from recent development within the village that traditional farmyards are losing their agricultural function. These changes which are in line with national trends are likely to continue and could affect the Home Farm buildings at the north end of Church Lane and at Church Farm. Local Plan policies indicate that changes within the Conservation Area will be limited although pressure for development, particularly on large plots, is likely to continue.

There is little scope for extension on a number of the smaller buildings within the Conservation Area, particularly where these form part of a group or terrace. Extension to some of the larger buildings in more spacious grounds is possible but will have an effect on the character, not only of the buildings but on their settings.

Alterations and extensions to village buildings are part of a natural process and need not be seen as a threat provided that the work is done in harmony. The following guidelines are intended to indicate how buildings can be changed without losing their essential character.

- All extensions should be in scale and character with the building to which they are added and should not dominate;
- Particular care should be taken to ensure that the original character of traditional buildings is maintained with extensions on major elevations set back from the existing and with roof lines lower;
- Plan forms should be narrow to reflect local tradition and roof pitches should relate closely to those of the existing building;
- Window proportions should relate to those of the principal building and should generally be set back within the reveals;
- It is not always necessary to copy roofing materials, particularly thatch, provided that a traditional clay tile or natural slate is used. This can help maintain the character of historic buildings by allowing the original building to be easily recognised. Where thatch is used it requires the use of simple rectilinear plan forms.
- Garages are not always easily assimilated into village scenes and prominent locations and double doors should be avoided. Driveway finishes should be rural in character.

In all cases the relationship with adjacent buildings and spaces needs to be considered. Also relevant is the need to comply with Building Regulations.

The planning context

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to determine which parts of their area are "Areas of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

The Act, and Government advice given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, Planning and the Historic Environment, states that the local planning authority should formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of all Conservation Areas and this assessment, published as the Mildenhall Conservation Area Statement, is part of the process.



Rural Conservation Areas do not need to be "neat and tidy" and there is sometimes a tendency to introduce urban or sub-urban features. Rural areas can accommodate a degree of benign neglect and over elaborate finishes and detailing should be avoided.

This Conservation Area Statement was adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 3 June 2004. SPG provides additional information on the interpretation and implementation of policies and proposals contained in a Local Plan.

Consultation procedures, consistent with the advice contained at paragraph 4.7 of PPG15 – *Planning and the Historic Environment*, have been undertaken during the preparation of this Statement. Paragraph 3.16 of PPG12 – *Development Plans*, also states that adequate consultation is a requirement for adoption of SPG. The Council considers that the consultation undertaken meets the obligations for consultations set out in PPG12.

The Kennet Local Plan 2001-2011 has been adopted by the Council and became operative on 30th April 2004. This Statement provides detailed background information for the interpretation of the Local Plan, particularly Policies HH5 and HH6. In addition, the guidance will be relevant to the application of Policies PD1, HC6, HC24, HC33, ED10, ED12, ED13, AT27, NR8, HH1 and HH2.

Summary and Conclusions

Summary

There are significant differences in parts of the Mildenhall Conservation Area. There are the street scenes of the main through road, Church Lane and the lane to Stitchcombe and these are in marked contrast to the open character of the river valley.

The landscape setting is a key component of the character of the Conservation Area but needs a long-term strategy for improvement. The reuse of redundant farm buildings needs to be handled carefully if the character of the village based on its links with past are to be maintained.

It should not be assumed that unlisted buildings are unimportant. Traditional buildings have a significant impact on village character and all alterations should reflect this. Ill-considered changes will be detrimental.

Boundary treatments are mostly walls and hedges but some modern timber fencing is beginning to appear. Traditional boundaries should be maintained.

Conclusions

The potential for development or redevelopment in the village is limited, particularly within the Conservation Area but there is likely to be pressure for redevelopment of low-density sites or backland areas and this needs to be resisted. Vacant farm buildings are especially vulnerable to unsympathetic alterations or even potential demolition. Village history and character is closely linked with agriculture and this needs to be recognised in all changes affecting farm buildings. It is important to recognise, and work with, the form and grain of the village taking into account historic boundaries and overall density.

Trees, verges and other landscape features are important but need to be protected from damage or neglect.



Building forms in the 18th and 19th centuries tend to be simple and this is part of their quality. 18th century buildings are commonly brick and clay tile with slate appearing in the 19th century. The attractive character of the brickwork comes from its bond and the use of lime mortar.

Alterations and extensions to existing buildings, especially buildings of historic interest, can adversely affect the character of the Conservation Area. All proposed changes need to be assessed in their context, taking a broad view of buildings and their settings. Erosion of character occurs through the application of standard solutions, and use of inappropriate standard building components: this should be avoided where possible.

Positive action is needed to protect the various elements that make up the special character of the village to ensure its long-term survival for the benefit of existing and future residents, businesses and visitors. The information in this character assessment is intended to assist this process and provide guidance for the future.



Priority has been given in this study to highlighting significant features of the village but omission of items from the text or from the illustrations should not be regarded as an indication that they are unimportant in conservation or planning terms.

Bibliography: The Victoria County History
R S Barron – The Geology of Wiltshire 1976
John Chandler – Marlborough and Eastern Wiltshire 2001
Reverend E.G Courtman – Mildenhall Wilts 1968 edition
Kennet District Council – Landscape Assessment and
Landscape Conservation Strategy 2001

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This leaflet is one in a series of Conservation Area Statements and Guidance Notes produced by Kennet District Council. For an up to date list, or if you require further information or advice, please contact:

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