



Clifton Conservation Area

Introduction

17 March 2004

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. This document is one of a series of revised conservation area appraisals in Mid Bedfordshire. Clifton Conservation Area was designated on 6 March 1971. The character and appearance of Clifton Conservation Area are considered separately. This will enable Development Control to determine whether proposals for Clifton preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Areas in need of enhancement are also identified.

Setting

Clifton Conservation Area can be accessed primarily from six directions excluding the north end of Church Street: Stanford Lane to the north, Stockbridge Road and Broad Street from the east, Pedley Lane and Shefford Road from the west and New Road from the south. Whilst most of these approaches include views of open countryside some of the views are adversely affected by the quality of modern housing design or large agricultural buildings.

The approach from Stanford Lane is probably the most pleasing, passing over a small bridge with the cricket pitch on the north side of the road and the treed grounds of Clifton Manor on the south. The cricket pitch and Manor are both outside of the conservation area. When arriving from this direction the road gently inclines towards the Church Hall and views are afforded of the tower belonging to the Parish Church of All Saints (grade II* listed). This incline is probably from whence Clifton derives its name on the basis that it means 'village on a cliff'.

Character

Clifton developed out of three areas of the village: Stockbridge Road/Church Street crossroads to the north, the southern end of Church Street in the vicinity of the village pond and to the west where Grange Street and Pedley Lane meet. These areas have since merged as more development has taken place. A number of the approach roads into Clifton Conservation Area converge at the heart of the village in the vicinity of the village pond. There is a distinct contrast between the character of the roads as a result of the road widths and what happens beyond the back-edge-of-footpaths. For instance, the narrowness and built form at Linkway contrasts notably with the width of Church Street predominantly flanked by walls and mature trees. The width of Church Street is accentuated by the fact that there is no footpath on the west side of the road.

A pub, war memorial, gateway and a fine Victorian Cottage form focal points when travelling along particular routes for instance: The Admiral public house when travelling westwards along Broad Street, the war memorial at the southern end of Church Street, the gateway to Clifton Lodge when approaching from Grange Street and no.47 Church Street (a Building of Local Interest, built in 1894 and otherwise known as Hawarden Cottage) when leaving Sears Close.

The village core focuses around the southern end of Church Street where two pubs, a shop, a cycle repair business, school and village pond exist. The area around the village pond contributes positively to the character of Clifton; often children are seen with their parents or grandparents feeding the ducks. The noise of the ducks adds to the sense of rural idyll. This situation has changed only slightly in the last 120 years.

Clifton's rural character, based on farming, has undergone significant change particularly since WWII with the creation of Rectory Close, Clifton House Close, Elm Farm Close, Lime Tree Road, Lychmead and Sears Close and the dwellings between the church and no.25 Church Street on the west side of this street.

The strong sense of an agricultural tradition is, however, still apparent in the vicinity of Radley Farm, Clifton Bury Farm and Clifton Farm. Weatherboarded outbuildings contribute positively to the rural, agricultural character of the village as seen at Pedley Lane, Bath Place and the northern part of Church Street (see map). The relatively loose-knit character

of Grange Street and the northern end of Church Street contrasts with the sense of enclosure created by Victorian terraces and buildings located on the back-edge-of-footpath at the Linkway, the southern end of Church Street and the northern end of Broad Street.

Appearance

There is no dominant architectural style or use of materials. Roofs are generally clay tiled or natural slate and there are no thatched properties within the conservation area which is surprising bearing in mind Clifton's agricultural past. Both yellow and red brick are used throughout with some properties displaying both types whilst render, exposed timber frame and painted brickwork are also in evidence.

Stockbridge Road

When entering the conservation area from Stockbridge Road a mature Horse Chestnut tree dominates the street scene (see photo below).



The opposite side of the road is marked by a high boundary wall to Whiston House (Building of Local Interest). Rising above the ridge line of Whiston House is one of only a few views of the church. Turning into Whiston Crescent there is another view of the church beyond nos. 38 and 40 Whiston Crescent. This is an important view into the conservation area from the entrance to Clifton Community and Sports Centre. Nearby is Bath Place, a one way street the ambience of which is in contrast to Stockbridge Road. This lane is marked by Sycamore trees and a row of single storey outbuildings.

Church Street

Situated at the northern most point of Clifton Conservation Area is Clifton Farm Barns: a barn conversion scheme of three dwellings. Immediately to the south of this group stands Clifton Farmhouse (grade II listed). Directly fronting the road and partly screening Clifton Farmhouse is a range of curtilage listed outbuildings which are all physically attached with no openings onto Church Street. The most northerly building in the range is the Onion Loft, a C19th weatherboarded building with a clay pantile roof. The fact that there are no openings onto Church Street is an important aspect of the group and should be retained thereby, maintaining the visual continuity of the group. The condition of the Onion Loft is such that enhancement is to be encouraged.

Opposite this group of barns are two 'green' spaces, the larger northern section is grassed with some small trees and screened from the road by a mature hedgerow whilst the southern section is marked by a row of mature lime trees (protected by a group tree preservation order) and lining the drive to Clifton Bury (grade II listed). Both areas combine to form an important green area, the appearance of which is important to retain.



View of the church from entrance to Sears Close.

Due to its height and location (being situated on Church Street which is well treed), there are limited views of the parish church on the skyline. However, standing at the entrance to Sears Close, there is a view of the church but only over the top of a bungalow called 'Floral'. To maintain the visual link between the church and the top end of Church Street, no two storey development should encroach onto this vista. To improve the view of the church, the undergrounding of overhead wires is encouraged.

On the north side of the junction between Church Street and Stockbridge Road is no.1 Stockbridge Road. This grade II listed building contributes positively to the sense of place when approaching the crossroads and its setting is enhanced by the attached weatherboarded outbuilding standing gable end on to Church Street.

Over the crossroads, the appearance of the conservation area changes to that of a linear space contained on both sides by walls of various height with mature trees behind. The most significant interruption to this sense of enclosure is the entrance to Clifton House Close and should not be repeated.

The leafy character of Church Street is reinforced by the well treed but poorly managed landscaped grounds to Clifton House, the trees being protected by a woodland tree preservation order. From Church Street there are glimpse views through to the coach house physically attached to the north side of Clifton House, the condition of which gives the perception that the main building may not be particularly well cared for. Clifton House is an important building within Church Street, the setting of which was designed to have a parkland quality and it is an important attribute to this eighteenth century mansion house. Any development affecting the historic setting of Clifton House would need to demonstrate that it preserved or enhanced that setting. Clifton House Close is situated on part of the former landscaped grounds to Clifton House, however, the scale and number of dwellings should not be repeated on the remainder of the garden to Clifton House.



At the southern end of Church Street and forming an important focal point stands the grade II listed war memorial (well head later converted to war memorial and dated 1881). Directly to the south is Folkestone House the most striking features of which are the highly decorated gable dormer windows (see photo left).

Broad Street / Shefford Road

Church Street continues round to the left passed the village butchers and Lower School towards Broad Street where, right on the corner, stands no.23 Broad Street. This is a rather tired looking property where an enhancement is to be encouraged, which, together with the adjoining property are Buildings of Local Interest. On the opposite side of the road is Clifton Strict Baptist Chapel (Building of Local Interest built in 1853). The decorative railings in front of the Chapel contribute positively to the appearance of the conservation area and should be retained.

Travelling back towards The Admiral public house there are a number of properties built with Rat Trap bond brickwork: nos.34-40 Broad Street (evens only), nos. 28-32 Broad Street (evens only) and nos. 2 and 4 New Road. This distinctive form of brickwork should be retained. To the west of nos. 2 and 4 New Road stands another weatherboarded outbuilding which contributes positively to the appearance of this part of the conservation area. Opposite stands nos.10 and 12 Shefford Road, a pair of grade II listed almshouses which opened in 1872. The door drip moulds have inscriptions: "Gleaner & Sower" and "Widow Homes" a reference to 2 monthly magazines. The editor of these magazines was Rev. Septimus Sears (Minister of the Strict and Particular Baptist Chapel for 35 years from 1844) who drew on the profits of the magazines to partly finance the building of the almshouses.

Grange Street
















Village pond.

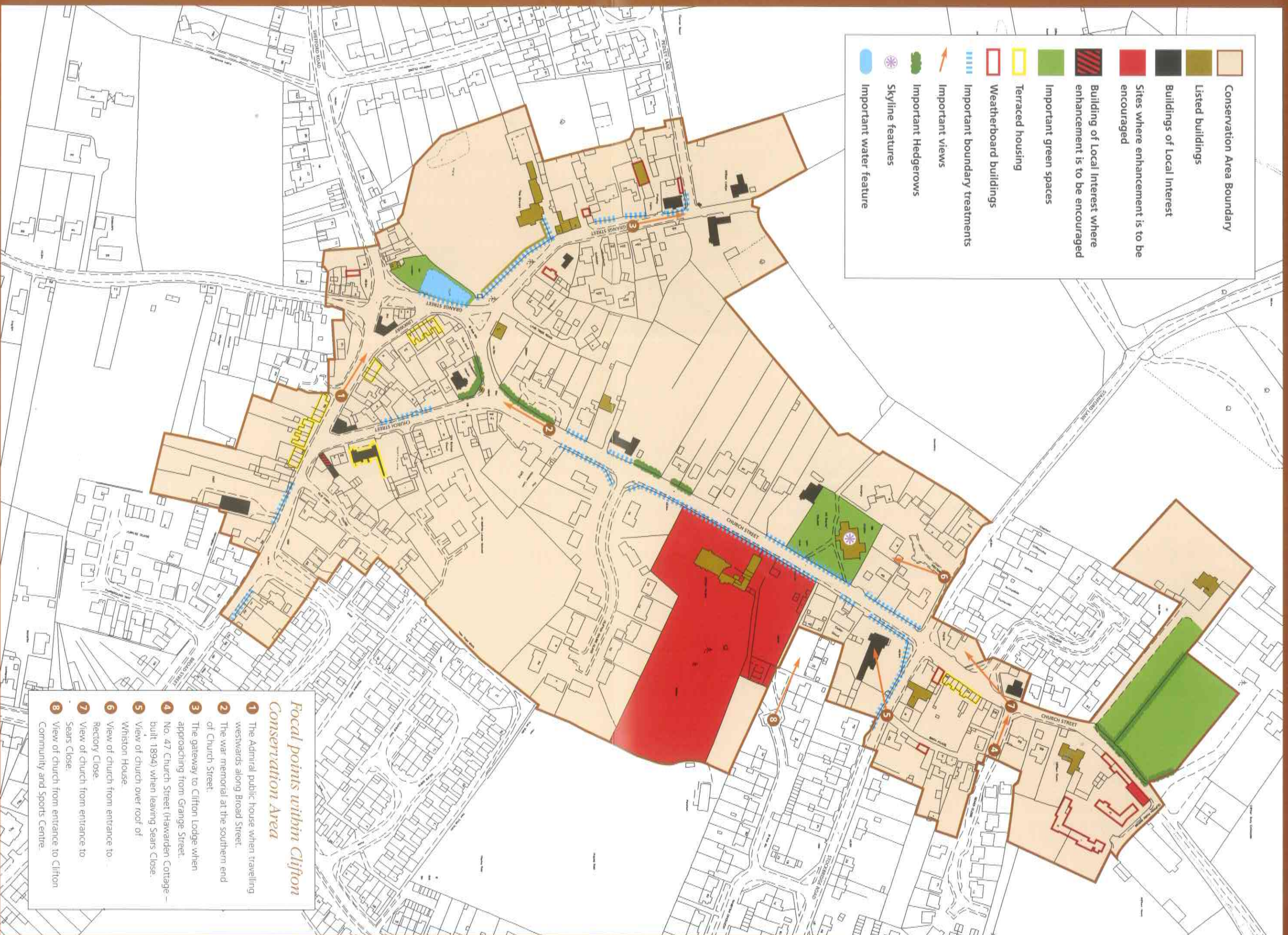
Moving north into Grange Street, the appearance of the conservation area changes. The weeping willows around the village pond, no.14 Grange Street (grade II listed) together with the red brick and timber frame structure (see front cover) denoting the east corner of the curtilage to The Grange (grade II listed) create a picturesque setting at the heart of the village.

Fronting Grange Street and lying between the pond and The Grange is a 60 metre long, red brick boundary wall. It is important to ensure that the garden grounds to The Grange are not developed thereby maintaining the setting of The Grange and the rural setting of the village pond.

Further north stand nos.3 and 5 Grange Street (grade II listed) which form an important group at the point where the road turns slightly further northwards. In the vicinity of Grange Street and Pedley Lane stand three more weatherboard buildings: the first is an outbuilding with chimney stack in the front garden of 22 Grange Street, the second is an outbuilding to the west of 9 Grange Street whilst the third is a more substantial grade II listed barn approximately 20 metres south west of Pedley Farmhouse.

Beyond the sharp left hand bend which is Pedley Lane, Grange Street reduces to a track with no.30 Grange Street lying to the east of the track and Clifton Lodge to the west (both are Buildings of Local Interest). There is an important view out of the village from the northern end of this track towards The Manor House. Historically, the building known as 'The Manor House' was previously called Clifton Lodge, whilst the building now known as 'Clifton Lodge' was formerly a pair of cottages. On leaving the conservation area via Pedley Lane the view is marked by single story outbuildings on the south side of the lane of which one is weatherboarded.

-  Conservation Area Boundary
-  Listed buildings
-  Buildings of Local Interest
-  Sites where enhancement is to be encouraged
-  Building of Local Interest where enhancement is to be encouraged
-  Important green spaces
-  Terraced housing
-  Weatherboard buildings
-  Important boundary treatments
-  Important views
-  Important Hedgerows
-  Skyline features
-  Important water feature



- Focal points within Clifton Conservation Area*
- 1 The Admiral public house when travelling westwards along Broad Street.
 - 2 The war memorial at the southern end of Church Street.
 - 3 The gateway to Clifton Lodge when approaching from Grange Street.
 - 4 No. 47 Church Street (Hawarden Cottage – built 1894) when leaving Sears Close.
 - 5 View of church over roof of Whiston House.
 - 6 View of church from entrance to Rectory Close.
 - 7 View of church from entrance to Sears Close.
 - 8 View of church from entrance to Clifton Community and Sports Centre.



Enhancement

The enhancement of the character and appearance of a conservation area can be defined as a reinforcement of the qualities providing the special interest which warranted designation. Firstly, it may be through the sympathetic development of sites identified in the detailed analysis of the area as opportunity or neutral sites. Secondly, it may involve positive physical proposals or thirdly, by the consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over shop fronts and alterations. Areas which warrant special consideration are marked on the Conservation Area Plan and are:

- No.23 Broad Street (see photo below).



- Clifton House and garden grounds
- The Onion Loft, no.3 Church Farm Barns

General Conservation Area Guidance

To maintain the distinctive character and appearance of Clifton Conservation Area it will be necessary to:

1. Retain Listed Buildings and Buildings of Local Interest. There will be a presumption against the demolition of unlisted buildings, such proposals will only be considered appropriate where the building does not make a positive contribution to the conservation area.
2. Ensure that new development positively contributes to the setting of listed buildings and/or the character and appearance of the conservation area in terms of siting, scale, design and materials used.
3. Ensure that there is a consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over shop fronts, alterations and lighting schemes.
4. Where necessary, seek to retain important boundary treatments as identified on the Clifton Conservation Area Plan.



Boundary Wall and ornate entrance gate to 'Times Well', Church Street.

5. Where necessary, retain trees, important hedgerows and important green spaces within the conservation area and ensure that, where new development is permitted, proper consideration is given to tree planting and appropriate landscape treatment.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

This document was subject to public consultation between 10 January 2004 and 6 February 2004. Consultation included an advertised exhibition at Clifton Community and Sports Centre and entry on the District Council's website. A full statement of the consultation process is available from the address below.



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