



**North
Northamptonshire
Council**

North Northamptonshire Council

Responses to ExA Questions 1

November 2025

PINS Reference EN010170

LPA Reference NW/25/00239/EXT

NNC unique registration identification number F8DE03132

Proposal (summary): An application for a Development Consent Order to construct, operate, maintain and decommission the Green Hill Solar Farm

Location: Green Hill Solar Farm

Q1.0.3 – Neighbourhood Plans

NNC Response – I can confirm that in NNC administrative area, Earls Barton Neighbourhood Plan is the only one which the impact on the proposed development. There are no others which need to be considered as part of this examination.

Mears Ashby has a 'Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document' (Adopted February 2017). This is of relevance.

Q1.0.5 – Cumulative developments

NNC Response – No comment. NNC agree with those identified.

Q1.0.6 – Local Development Plans and Policies

NNC Response – These are provided in the LIR.

Q1.0.7 – National and Local Planning Policies

NNC Response – We are content with the policy analysis.

Q1.0.8 – Policy and Guidance

NNC Response – No.

Q1.0.9 – Planning applications and consents

NNC Response – No additional applications/consents granted since the application was submitted.

Q1.0.10 – Committed developments

NNC Response – NNC had input into these list throughout the process. Nothing further to add.

Q1.0.12 – Potential Main Issues for Examination

NNC Response – We are not content with the summary of the position provided by the applicant and the principal areas of disagreement identified at time of submission of the application. Landscape and visual impact is a principal area of disagreement as is cultural heritage (built). The likelihood of these two issues being resolved during the Examination are low. There is no mention of highway or transport matters that have been raised either, however these matters would be described as medium likelihood of being resolved during Examination. NNC's LIR describe the issues in more detail.

Q1.0.13 – Legal Agreements

NNC Response – No discussions have taken place between the applicant and NNC regarding developing a s106 legal agreement. NNC consider that the scheme needs a substantial financial mitigation package, to address the physical and environmental

impacts and harms associated with the development and to support opportunities to address achieving carbon neutrality. Any associated legal agreement to secure community benefits will also need to address how the scheme will be decommissioned at the end of the Scheme lifetime, e.g. bonds, sinking funds etc to secure remediation.

Q12.0.4 – Conservation Area Character Appraisals

NNC Response - Easton Maudit Conservation Area (attached) and Mears Ashby Conservation Area (attached). Grendon Conservation Area does not currently have a character appraisal.

Q16.0.2 – Planting Growth Rates

NNC Response – This approach is considered broadly reasonable for assessment purposes, provided that it is supported by an appropriate planting specification and suitable long-term management plan.

In practice, growth rates are species-dependent and will also vary according to local conditions such as soil conditions and growth competition. For example, faster-growing pioneer species such as alder, willow, or birch can achieve or exceed 0.4 metres per year under favourable conditions, whereas slower-growing native species such as oak, field maple or holly may establish more gradually. The uniform rate therefore represents an average rather than a site-specific prediction.

The Council is content with the use of this assumption on the basis that:

- The Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) defines species composition, planting densities, stock sizes, and management regimes suitable to the range of site conditions;
- Monitoring and replacement planting is secured to address underperforming areas or slower-growing species; and

Subject to these provisions being secured through the DCO Requirements and detailed LEMP, the Council considers the assumed growth rate to be acceptable and proportionate for the purposes of the landscape and visual assessment.

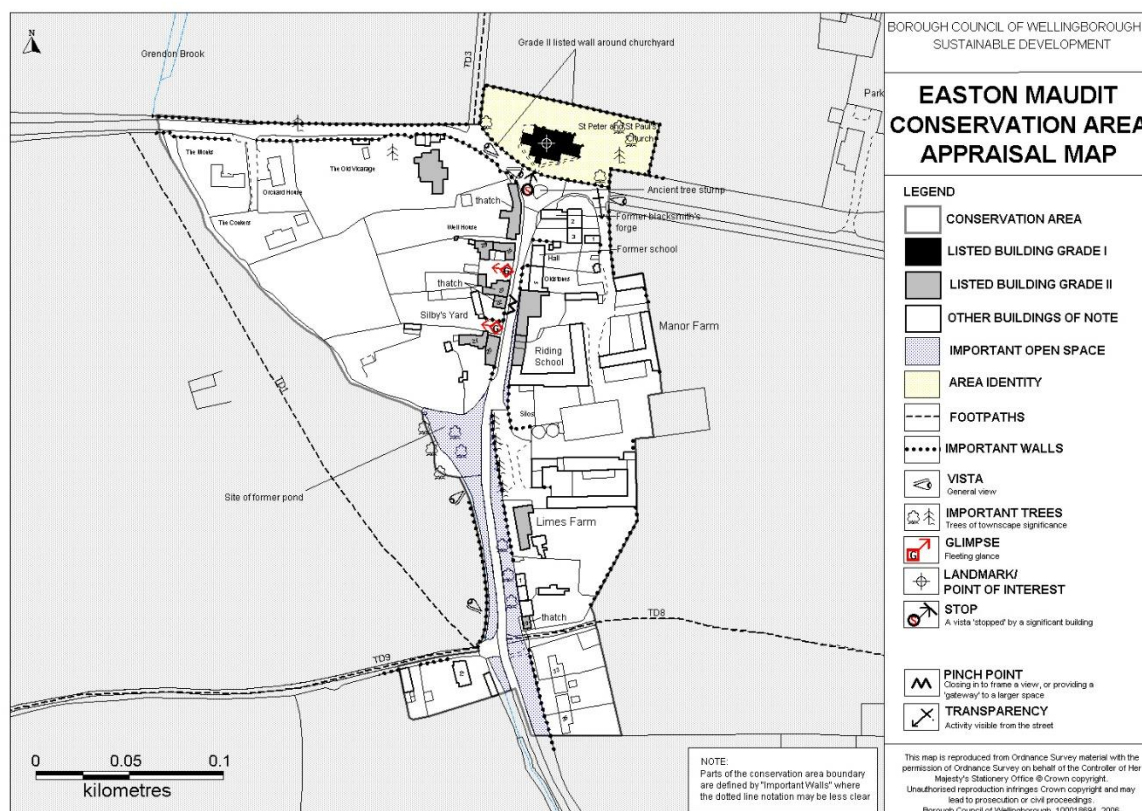
Q16.0.3 – Viewpoint and Photomontage Locations

NNC Response – The Council is satisfied that the viewpoints and photomontages provided to date are appropriately located and provide an adequate and representative basis for assessing visual effects.

Q22.0.1 – Impact on sand and gravel allocation M2: Strixton – Bozeat

NNC Response - Yes we are satisfied that the mitigation is sufficient on that site.

Easton Maudit Conservation Area Appraisal Map



EASTON MAUDIT CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

1 ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- 1.1 The village of Easton Maudit is located about seven miles south of Wellingborough and eleven miles from Northampton. Most of the southern half of the parish of 730 hectares is on Boulder Clay at 90m – 110m AOD, but streams in the north draining towards Grendon Brook have cut deep-sided valleys through limestone, silts and clays [RCHME, Vol II, 1979]. The parish is two miles north to south and one mile east to west with the village itself located to the north. It is bounded on the east by Bozeat, north by Grendon and west by Yardley Hastings, lying on the borders of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire and west of the road between Wellingborough and Olney. With the exception of the (former) rectorial lands, it is owned by the Marquess of Northampton **(currently the seventh Marquess)* [VCH IV 11, 1937 OUP].
- 1.2 It appears that the place name is essentially topographically-derived relative to an “East Farm” perhaps associated with Denton and Whiston lying to the west. The second element is linked to John Maled **(Latin: Maledoctus = dunce)* who held the manor in 1166 and whose family name was also being spelt Mauduit (1242) and Maudut (1268). The village name is therefore recorded as having evolved from Eston(e) (1086), Estun (12th century), through Estone Maudeut (1298), Estone Juxta Boseyate (1305), Eston Mauduyt (1377), to Esson Mawdett in 1611 [Gover, et al].
- 1.3 Records of manorial succession commence with William Peverel, the Conqueror’s natural son, and the Countess Judith, his niece, who “held in Estone 2 ½ virgates at the general survey [Whellan]. In 1206/07 John Mauduit granted land in the parish to Gilbert, son of Richard de Easton and Christine, his mother. By 1402 the manor had been transferred to the Trussell family. Subsequently passed to the Earls of Oxford, it was then sold to Christopher Yelverton (buried in the church) in 1578 who was Sergeant-at-law (1589), Sergeant to the Queen (1598), Judge of the King’s Bench (1601/02) and Speaker of the House of Commons (1597) [VCH].
- 1.4 Ironically, two of the most interesting historic features of the village no longer exist. The first element is the settlement’s extent in the immediate post-medieval period. Bridges [Ref] records 30 houses in 1741 whilst in 1874 Whellan notes “from foundations of houses, dovecotes and walls of wells which have been discovered, it is supposed to have been a much larger place... Tradition says that there were once many weavers shops here.” VCH indicates population levels of 192 in 1871 and 129 in 1931, but suggests that the parish “once housed a considerably larger number of inhabitants” and that it was said to have “suffered considerable depopulation since the enclosures by Sir Christopher Yelverton in the time of Charles I (probably 1636).” The existence of a larger village is indeed archaeologically corroborated by the RCHME [Ref] which recorded “slight remains of former house sites within and around

[the village], notably to the west of the former pond, (see Appraisal Map), and suggested that the remains “may relate to the known decrease in population in the 17th century”. The footpath TD1, to the west, appears to follow the route of an old lane associated with the western houses – seen as a hollow way. The remains are embanked and ditched closes with traces of house sites at their eastern ends.

- 1.5 The second element which has a bearing on the origins and development of the settlement, but which now no longer exists, is the manor house, formerly sited immediately to the east of the church. This appears to have been a late-medieval building, rebuilt by Henry Yelverton on acquiring the manor in 1578, and subsequently pulled down directly after the sale of the estate in 1801 to his neighbours the Comptons of Castle Ashby. The house and its associated grounds were fairly extensive, taking up all the land to the north, east and west of the church, but the only clue in the landscape today as to its former existence is the occasional large parkland cedar tree in the fields around the church to the north of the present proposed conservation area.
- 1.6 It appears, therefore, that as a result of the fundamental socio-economic changes which the settlement experienced in the 17th century, both its population and its physical extent reduced markedly. The agrarian economy thus implied is reflected in Whellan’s recording of the following local employment in 1874:

Humphrey Cooper, parish clerk
Thomas Labutt, higgler *(hawker or peddler of provisions)
Miss Emma Longland, schoolmistress
Samuel Silby, shopkeeper, and
James Adcock, John Allebone, William Church (The Lodge), George Coles and John Perry Davison, farmers.

- 1.7 Substantive 20th century development was limited to four interwar council houses at the southern end of the High Street (Nos. 33 – 36), and three later properties to the west in the Grendon Road (The Monks, Orchard House and The Conkers). In view of the relatively compact form thus maintained, the present village conservation area boundary is drawn around the entire built-up area.

2. KEY ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURE

- 2.1 The village is of linear form along a single street, with houses concentrated at the north end adjacent to the church. Although it is not possible to accurately plot the configuration of streets and dwellings which comprised the original larger pre-17th century settlement, the layout as seen today appears to be organic, perhaps associated with the watercourse to the west. However, the alignment of the village street relative to the parish church does suggest conscious planning, and this inter-relationship remains the most significant aspect of the layout as seen today.

3. ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

- 3.1 With the exception of the Grade I listed Church of St Peter and St Paul, all listed buildings are Grade II and are concentrated at the north end of the village (see Appraisal Map). Dating of the secular entries (based on the original building programme rather than on any subsequent extensions), spans from the late-medieval (c. 1500) former “hall house” at No. 22 to the mid-19th century dwellinghouses at Nos. 25 and 26. Each of the four centuries within this time period is represented by buildings on the statutory list, with a slight concentration in the middle of the 18th century when the imposing Limes Farm and Manor Farm and barns were constructed. Domestic building heights vary from single-storey with attic, seen at the thatched No. 10, to the three-storey Old Vicarage.
- 3.2 The parish church was entirely rebuilt in the 14th century, probably replacing a Norman structure of which no trace remains. It is an excellent example of Decorated Gothic of c.1320. Apart from the upper part of the tower and spire, and the later north chapel, the church was complete as we see it today by 1350. [Gyles Isham].
- 3.3 Originally thatched and dating from the late-16th century, the Old Vicarage was considerably altered in the 19th century with an extra storey added and the roof slated. A south wing was constructed in 1852. Architecturally undistinguished, its historic interest lies in its literary associations. The property was the home for 29 years of Dr Thomas Percy (1729-1811) where he produced his most important work including the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, published in 1765. Among his many visitors were Shenstone and Garrick, Goldsmith and Doctor Johnson. Johnson’s name is still associated with the vicarage by a raised terrace known as “Johnson’s Walk” [Isham, op cit]. Dr Percy was succeeded in the living by his friend and correspondent, the philologist Robert Nares in 1782, which he held until 1805. Nares was Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum. [VCH IV 11].
- 3.4 “Other Buildings of Note” are shown on the Appraisal Map in black edging. As examples of good quality vernacular architecture, they complement the formally listed buildings and help to create continuity and a “sense of place” in the historic streetscape. The precise dating of this class of building is, however, difficult to establish in view of likely alterations since original construction, but it appears that collectively they lie within the basic time frame indicated above.

4. SPACES: TOWNSCAPE ENCLOSURE AND GREEN SPACE

- 4.1 The spatial character of the single main village street varies markedly along its length. To the south there is a distinct sense of openness engendered by the views over the adjoining pasture land to the west, acknowledged by the “Vista” symbols on the Appraisal Map, as well as by the grassed roadside verges shown in blue notation as “Important Open Space”. In contrast, however, the section to the north is developed relatively densely on both sides of the street, forming a traditional village street, the intimacy of which is enhanced by the “Visual Stop” which the parish church forms at the top end.

In the latter case particularly, intermittent spaces between buildings and setting back of frontages from pavement-edge, for example at Silby's yard and Nos. 2 & 3 respectively, create a pleasing sense of informality. Two red "Glimpse" symbols indicate fleeting views through gaps in the built form to the fields beyond.

- 4.2 In common with many other villages in the Wellingborough area with historic merit, the stone walling (shown in black dot notation on the Appraisal Map) which occurs both in the street(s) and on the edges of the Appraisal area, provides an overall sense of continuity and enclosure when read together with the vernacular buildings. This harmonious relationship is underpinned by the ubiquitous traditional coursed rubble stonework.
- 4.3 Perhaps the most significant green space in townscape terms is the site of the former pond (see general location indicated on the Appraisal Map), containing two large oak trees and a beech. This wide grassed area links with grass verges on either side of the road to the south (shown in blue notation on the map) which in turn include a row of mature lime trees adjacent to Limes Farm and Nos. 7-9. The following landscaped/treed areas are also of notable townscape value:
- the mixed deciduous and coniferous trees in the churchyard, which is shown in the special "Area Identity" notation on the Appraisal Map in recognition of its significance as a place of tranquil retreat;
 - the ancient tree-stump immediately opposite the church entrance;
 - the large cypress west of the church, almost certainly a vestige of the landscaped gardens of the former Easton Maudit House; and
 - the pine in the Vicarage gardens clearly visible from the Grendon road.

5. BUILDING MATERIALS

Common building materials and features of special architectural or historic interest visible from the public domain include the following:

- **Walling**
Regular coursed limestone with occasional ironstone pieces; red brick; ashlar gable parapet and kneelers (seen at Limes Farmhouse).
- **Roofing**
Plain tiles; "Castle Ashby" terra cotta; Welsh slate; pantiles; longstraw thatch (block-cut ridge).
Chimney features include stone, with red/brown brick weathering; red brick (typically on stone houses); decorative stoneware chimney pots; circular terra cotta pots.
- **Windows/Doors**
Casement, including leaded.
- **Free-standing walling**
Limestone, with capping in terra cotta, cock-and-hen stone or half-round mortar; flat rubble stone wall tops around churchyard with convex mortar capping; red brick.
- **Other Features**
Patterned fretted Victorian barge-boards to verges and dormer heads; dormers, hipped or gabled, set back on purlins; exposed rafter feet;

thatch extending to broad porch on two elevations with rustic timber supports, “cottage ornee”-style (No. 10); timber porches with waney oak fronts; timber paintwork in cream or white on shutters, garage doors, windows, etc [Estate colours?]; stone window sills with lintels in either stone or oak, some in shallow-arch form; chestnut paling fencing; plank doors; plank straight-topped timber gates.

Agricultural cart sheds, etc. – limestone; weathered asbestos corrugated roof covering; red rubbed-brick 3-centre arched openings.

6. EXTENT OF LOSS, INTRUSION OR DAMAGE TO BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- 6.1 The 20th century barns and silos associated with Limes Farm are inevitably utilitarian structures lacking in architectural quality. Whilst they are intrusive in an otherwise unspoilt traditional historic environment, the impact is mitigated as a result of their positioning set back from the village street and by the fact that in landscape terms their cladding materials are gradually mellowing with organic patination.
- 6.2 Up until the fourth quarter of the 20th century, the Vicarage enjoyed extensive rear gardens running westwards to the village stream. This relationship was severed at that time, however, by the somewhat arbitrary erection of three dwellinghouses due west of the Vicarage, accessed directly from the Grendon Road (see Appraisal Map). The limestone facing material on two is not traditionally formed and laid (i.e. it is not regular coursed cropped rubble) and the third is faced in Bradstone reconstructed stone material. Although their building materials are therefore not locally distinctive, the three properties in question are, structurally, divorced from the historic village core and thereby have only a limited impact on the character of the conservation area as a whole.
- 6.3 Areas of pavement kerbing around numbers 20, 22 and 23 have apparently been damaged over time by vehicles, as has a proportion of the grass verges opposite and running down to the site of the former pond. Also the metal support structure inside the ancient tree-stump opposite the church has become discoloured through weathering. These items do detract from the area’s attractiveness and character, and as they are located in “the public realm” their suggested remediation is put forward in Management/Enhancement Proposals in Section 8, below.

7. NON-RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

These are limited to:

- The Church of St Peter and St Paul.
- Limes Farm. This is the sole working (arable) farm in the village.
- Manor Farm. No longer a working farm, the premises are given over to a riding school and stables. Horses can often be seen either led or ridden along the access way to the east of the main street and this visible activity is recorded on the Appraisal Map by the arrowed “Transparency” symbol.

- The village hall, formerly the village school (see Appraisal Map).

As already suggested, the parish church as a “land use” is an extremely significant aspect of the proposed conservation area’s character both as a building type and as regards its apparent influence on the plan form. The two farms with their imposing barns in turn demonstrate the historic traditional agrarian function of the settlement.

8. MANAGEMENT/ENHANCEMENT PROPOSALS

As a result of survey work associated with this Character Appraisal, two potential project areas have been highlighted to achieve sustainable enhancement of Easton Maudit Conservation Area, viz:

1. Repair/reinstatement of the pavements/kerbs in the northern part of the village street between the entrance to Limes Farm and the church; and consolidation and protection of the grass verges around the area of the former pond and the Limes Farm entrance.

In both cases, surfaces have been damaged over time by over-riding of vehicles, and their repair is desirable in both functional and aesthetic terms.

2. Repainting the metal structure supporting the ancient tree-stump in front of the church.

This work was carried out about ten years ago in an endeavour to retain the stump for posterity. It has, however, become rather unsightly through weathering discolouration.

MEARS ASHBY CONSERVATION AREA

CHARACTER APPRAISAL

1. INTRODUCTION

Mears Ashby Conservation Area was designated in January 1977, but no associated character appraisal was produced at the time as relevant government guidance did not require it. However, all conservation areas now need such appraisal documents in order to properly identify the particular characteristics that it is desired to preserve and enhance in accordance with the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 Mears Ashby is a village located approximately 5 miles to the west of the town of Wellingborough, lying in the centre of its parish where four main roads converge: that from Northampton enters the south side and a road crossing the parish from east to west connects the village with Wilby and Sywell.
- 2.2 Higher parish land in the north and east is covered in boulder clay and rises to a height of 122 metres above sea level. A band of lower estuarine sands and clays separates this from the slightly lower areas of Northampton sand. The latter predominates in the west and south and is cut by the steep-sided valleys of south south east-flowing streams where the upper lias clay is exposed down to a height of 76 metre above sea level.
- 2.3 The creation of one such stream by this local geology, the Swanspool Brook (known locally as Bell's Brook), flowing through the village centre, coupled with the availability of a series of adjacent springs and a plentiful supply of well water, appears to be a key factor in the settlement's siting in this particular location.
- 2.4 Prior to the Norman Conquest, Mears Ashby was part of a Saxon Estate owned by the theyn¹ Bondi. The place-name "Ash-by" or "Ash-tree by" relates to a "farm by the trees" and its early purpose was to supply timber for Bondi's wider estate.^{2 3}
- 2.5 At the time of the Domesday Book (1086) the village is recorded as comprising 20 households and a manor. The total population was, therefore, perhaps 100, growing crops in the arable land and grazing animals beside the streams. The

¹ A knight's attendant or follower

² The suffix "by" means a farmstead, indicating a Danish presence.

³ W G Callis *Mears Ashby: From Ice Age to Space Age*, 1991 (unpublished).

farmland would have been on the lighter soils to the south while the area to the north was still extensively forested. There would have been sufficient space for that population on the east side of the village brook.

- 2.6 In the first centuries after the Conquest, the village grew to its present shape of many lanes and small paddocks. Perhaps the earliest development was a lane linking two Roman sites (to north and south) making today's Wellingborough Road. This had a string of crofts along its east side like any village street.
- 2.7 Two separate manors were formed in this period. Whilst it is not clear from records which came first, an Elizabethan survey⁴ refers, firstly, to the "Church Close" (land north of the churchyard, which was much smaller then) "whereon stood the north manor of the lord." The site of the church may have been chosen for its defensive position relative to the bank of the stream and perhaps the first lord after the Conquest settled there and put up a small wooden church beside his home, later building a bigger manor house a little to the north. Church Street from that point to North Street is well-sunken, showing great age. It would lead from the north manor house to the farm complex (Manor Farm) of that owner.⁵
- 2.8 A royal commission survey⁶ refers to a small rectangular pond in the valley bottom "much altered by recent landscaping, bounded by a massive earthen dam 2 metres high on its downstream side which is thought to be medieval in origin." The pond, still in existence today in the grounds of the present Manor House (on Manor Road), lies approximately 50 metres west of Church Close and may have been associated with the original North Manor House.
- 2.9 With regard to the South Manor House the royal commission survey refers to "Home Close", west of Dale Farm/Dale Close and opposite the Griffin's Head public house, and a large square enclosure in the centre bounded by scarps and banks up to 1.5 metres high. The Vaux survey (of which the royal commission appears to have been unaware), however, reveals this as the site of the South Manor House comprising a hall and parlour of 5.5 bays, milk house, kitchen, gelding house, store house, stable all of 6 bays, plus another stable, rye/hay barns of 7 bays, etc. in an estimated 3.5 acre site. William Callis feels that this site is "likely to be of great antiquity" and, as the location of the homestead of the very first head of the community, was in fact the earlier of the two manorial sites.
- 2.10 The village appears to have gradually developed in a westward direction. Several embanked and scarped closes project beyond the existing house plots

⁴ *Survey of the Manor of Ashbie Maris, 1577 for the Rt Hon Wm Vaux of Harrowden*. Fenland Field Officer, Cambridgeshire Archaeological Committee: *1577 Manorial Survey*. At that time William Vaux held the lordship of Mears Ashby.

⁵ W G Callis op cit

⁶ Royal Commission for the Historic Monuments of England, Vol 2, p109. 1979.

along the steep valley side immediately west of the church, presumably former closes now abandoned.⁷ Later, as the population grew, the stream was crossed and another street, today's Manor Road, was added running north-south.⁸

2.11 The village's place-name is thought to have evolved from the early Asbi (Domesday, 1086), through Essebi (1166), Aissebi (1176), Northesseby (1220, probably intended to distinguish it from Castle Ashby to the south), Esseby Mares (1281, marking the addition of the personal surname of Robert de Mares whom king Henry III granted/gave ownership of the Ashby Manor (north half) in 1242), Mares Assheby (1297), Ass Meeres Asshebye (1578), Maires Ashby (1659), and Ashby Mares (1791).⁹ Its anatomy, therefore, comprises the original Saxon "farm by the trees" with the addition of the surname of a subsequent lord of the manor.

2.12 The estimated population at Domesday of 100 had doubled by the time of the Vaux survey of 1577 to approximately 200, based on the record of "47 houses, plus one decayed and one now a stable". Bridges records "90 families" in 1722 amounting to perhaps 400-450 people, and records for later in that century of 12 full-time farmers and 18 tradesmen, including 3 carpenters, 2 bakers, 2 blacksmiths, 2 tailors, a weaver, a butcher, a mason, a barber, a shoemaker and 2 publicans, paint a picture of a healthy and growing community with a strong socio-economic base.¹⁰

2.13 Official population figures compiled in the subsequent centuries show numbers steadily growing from this level, but suffering a set-back around the turn of and in the first half of the 20th century from which it is only gradually recovering, viz:

1821	442
1861	525
1901	367
1951	333
1981	416
2011	473

2.14 A high level of building took place in the mid and late 19th century following the Enclosure, reflecting a long period of overall agricultural prosperity for the bigger farmers, the landowners and the clergy, whose income came from farms and glebe rents. Nevertheless, the sharp drop in numbers noted at the

⁷ RCHME op cit

⁸ W G Callis

⁹ from *Place Names of Northamptonshire*, Gover, Mawer and Stenton, 1933.

¹⁰ Bridges ii 137 1722

beginning of the 20th century was due to the nationwide agricultural depression, with the offer of higher wages in factories and towns, together with homeworking in domestic workshops (e.g. boot and shoe) giving over to full factory production.

3. KEY ELEMENTS OF STRUCTURE

- 3.1 The primary component of the village's structure is the natural valley running north-south through its centre with Bell's Brook flowing at the bottom. The street pattern which developed around this feature is roughly square in shape, described by Manor Road, North Street, Wellingborough Road and Wilby Road, with the intervening Church Street/Lady's Lane respecting the alignment of the brook. The settlement's form is, therefore, described as clustered or "agglomerated" with the various zones or elements linked together, rather like a jigsaw puzzle, and morphologically interconnected by the striking central natural valley.
- 3.2 This valley area is described in the Vaux survey of 1577 as including 19 small enclosures called variously "close", "field", "croft", "spinney" or "pingel/pyghle", indicating that historically the village had a significant proportion of open land within its urban structure. The modern village is characterized by the memory of this generous medieval open land in the various paddocks, fields and treed areas on either side of the brook and also on the east side of Lady's Lane, the site of the south manor.
- 3.3 The existence of a small village green immediately west of the church (later absorbed into the garden of Church House in the 19th century)^{11 12} suggests that the area around the northern manor house and the church emerged as the settlement's social nucleus. Certainly today, viewed from the vantage point of the churchyard, there is a clear sense of being at the heart of the settlement.

4. ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

Listed Buildings' Overview

- 4.1 Listed buildings in the conservation area (see purple, orange and yellow colouration on the appraisal map), commonly feature:
 - Squared or regular coursed lias¹³ with either ironstone or limestone;
 - Ashlar gable parapets and kneelers; occasional gabled roof dormers (see Church House and 14 North Street);
 - Chimney stacks generally in brick and stone together, but also seen exclusively in either brick or stone, located variously at ridge or gable end.

¹¹ W G Callis

¹² The village pump stood there and its well is now under the roadway.

¹³ Generic geological term covering types of ironstone, oxidised sandstone and Mears Ashby "Pendle" stone.

Occasional ashlar stacks with moulded stone cornice (see 31 Lady's Lane);

- Wooden casement windows with wood lintels; stone mullion windows, occasionally including transoms (see The Vicarage). Occasional cast-iron glazing bars (see Griffin's Head);
- Roofs mainly slate or plain tile; pantile; thatch at 25 Lady's Lane, 5 Duchess End, 16 North Street and 1 Duchess End; Collyweston slate at Mears Ashby Hall and dovecote; and corrugated metal (see barn at 30 Wilby Road).

4.2 Apart from the Grade II* listed parish church dating from the 12th century¹⁴ the listed buildings are fairly evenly spread out within the conservation area, with identifiable clustering perhaps in the Wilby Road between the Hall and Duchess End, and, again, properties east and south of the church. They mainly comprise Grade II post-medieval domestic examples either of 2 or 2.5 storeys (the majority) or of 1.5 storeys (the remainder). Many (68%) of the Grade II listed buildings date from the period 1685-1750 and this is likely in part to reflect the relative political and economic stability at that time which gave people the confidence to invest in land and property, but may equally be related to developments in building construction techniques and the survivability of more robust solid stone buildings.

4.3 In many cases primary listed buildings will have adjuncts within their historic or present freeholds including outbuildings, barns and boundary walling. These are termed "curtilage-listed" buildings and the fabric enjoys equivalent statutory protection to that afforded to the primary or "nominal" listed building. These are shown in yellow colouration on the Appraisal Map.

Other Buildings of Note

4.4 Over 40 additional buildings have been identified as "of note" as shown in blue colouration on the appraisal map. These buildings are mainly 18th and 19th century in date, of local stone or brick and with slate roof covering. Whilst not at present capable of being considered for statutory listing, they are recognized as examples of good quality vernacular architecture. Taken together with the various listed and curtilage-listed buildings, they help to create a strong sense of place, making a positive contribution to the listed buildings' settings and to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole.

¹⁴ Note: all dating refers to buildings' first construction phase.

5. SPACES:TOWNSCAPE ENCLOSURE AND GREEN SPACE

- 5.1 As alluded to above, Mears Ashby is particularly well-served with green space in the central valley and land east of Lady's Lane. Although the various tracts of land (shown as "Important Open Space" in green dot colouration on the appraisal Map) are not accessible by the public, they constitute a unique visual amenity as a dramatic verdant backdrop to the built environment in the remainder of the conservation area.
- 5.2 Many of the important trees in the conservation area are located in this central open area, and these are shown indicatively on the appraisal map as either deciduous or coniferous specimens. The contiguous churchyard, which constitutes quasi-public space, contributes positively to local character and is duly recognized on the map under the "Area Identity" notation for its role as both a vantage point for enjoying the valley landscape as well as a place of quiet contemplation.
- 5.3 Townscape enclosure, indicated on the appraisal map by the "Building Line" (thick black line) notation along property frontages, occurs only infrequently in the settlement and is limited to modest stretches at the north end of Manor Road, the east end of Vicarage Lane and the north end of Lady's Lane. Perusal of the earliest available Ordnance Survey map of 1888 shows that Mears Ashby appears never to have had a tradition of continuous built-up frontages like, for example, Ecton or Earls Barton. This seems to have been dictated by the former's agglomerated structure, as opposed to the linear or centrally-focussed forms, respectively, of the latter villages.

6. BUILDING MATERIALS

- 6.1 Common materials and features of special architectural or historic interest visible from the street include the following, with some typical examples given in brackets:-

- **Walling**

Squared or regular coursed lias, often featuring Mears Ashby "Pendle" stone; ironstone; limestone; stone with brick dressings on corners and window/door surrounds (28 North Street); red stock brick; white, cream or grey-painted render to front or gable stonework or brickwork.

- **Miscellaneous Features**

Ashlar gable parapets and kneelers; decorative brick detail at eaves (double row of stretchers) and verge (15 Church Street); plain verge; exposed rafters on eaves; decorative verge weather-boarding in matt black (16 Manor Road), or plain boarding in white; chamfered engineering brick string course at 1st floor level; timber gabled porch

canopy; hipped open double porch; chimney stacks in brick or stone or combinations thereof; occasional ashlar stacks with moulded cornice; 2-stage chimneys with single or double decorative cornice (Sunnyside, Vicarage Lane); clay/vitreous chimney pots; pyramidal hipped roof (20 Manor Road); flat-roofed or gabled dormers at eaves (wall-plate) or on purlin.

- **Free-Standing Walling**

Stone with engineering brick or flat stone capping; occasional brick.

“Important walls” are shown in a black dotted notation on the Appraisal Map, and walls which are themselves listed are indicated accordingly.

- **Roofing**

Predominantly slate and plain tile; clay pantile; thatch; Collyweston slate; corrugated metal; triple-Roman clay tile (outbuildings at 11 North Street).

- **Windows and Doors**

Ledged and braced tongue-and-groove timber door, white painted; plank door in white; yellow-painted timber doors; cast iron windows (5/7 Paddocks Lane); timber casement windows with glazing bars or “diamond” leading; stone mullioned windows, occasionally with transoms (31 Lady’s Lane and The Vicarage).

Note on Stone

- 6.2 Mears Ashby Stone is part of the Northampton Sand (Duston Member) geological formation known as “Pendle”, and is a limestone which forms good freestone. It is pale yellow in colour and best seen in Mears Ashby Hall where it was used in large ashlar blocks and is relatively intricately carved in the porch. The stone was also used for the Vicarage and the Callis’ farmhouse at 30 Wilby Road.
- 6.3 However, many of the historic buildings in Mears Ashby consist of rubble-stones that are represented by a mixture of ironstones, limonitic (oxidized) sandstone and Mears Ashby Stone, hence the use of the generic term “lias” in the various listing citations. 31 Lady’s Lane is constructed mainly of local Mears Ashby Stone ashlar and rubble-stone.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Strategic Stone Study: A Building Stone Atlas of Northamptonshire* English Heritage (Historic England) 2011.

7. EXTENT OF INTRUSION OR DAMAGE TO BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- 7.1 Historic map coverage of the village shows that it changed very little between the years 1888 and 1952,¹⁶ and that the visually important central valley area had remained undeveloped right up to the middle of the 20th century. The built fabric was laid out at a relatively low density and was characterized by vernacular narrow-depth cottages and barns, the architectural style and layout of which is felt to be locally distinctive.
- 7.2 However, a process of infilling and peripheral village expansion began in the latter half of the 20th century with the 1978 map showing, in particular, encroachment of residential development onto the central valley area south of North Street, east of Manor Road and west of Church Street. Current coverage shows that the loss of open valley land has continued, with additional residential plot development on Church Street and Manor Road and the north side of North Street. This loss is considered to be intrusive and damaging to the character of the natural valley in this part of the conservation area.
- 7.3 Moreover, a significant proportion of the dwelling-houses built in the conservation area over the last 60 years or so have been constructed of mass-produced brick and concrete roofing tiles and with a general absence of craftsman-like architectural detailing. Built development of this type is not locally distinctive and, as such, is damaging to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

8. MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 8.1 Designation of a conservation area also necessitates the drawing up of a management plan intended to improve the appearance of the area.
- 8.2 As a result of the appraisal survey, and following consultation with Mears Ashby Parish Council, it is proposed that the Mears Ashby Conservation Area Management Plan should comprise the following:
- 8.3 Working with the relevant stakeholders to investigate and seek appropriate funding for a programme of road/highway improvement works to include the following:
- Wilby Road/Wellingborough Road/Duchess End junction. Provision of clearer road-signage and road markings to assist with traffic control at this junction by make priorities clearer. The road sign nearest to Dale Close to be upgraded as this does not make clear that the traffic priority is to the left and not straight over the junction.

¹⁶ The village extent at 1952 roughly coincides with the present conservation area.

- Wilby Road. Move the 30 mph sign westward to just past the bend where Harrison's barn conversion has just been completed.
 - Outside 2 North Street. Clearer white lining/possible parking bay with a view to making the left turn into Highfield Road safer.
 - A scheme for a general village 20 mph speed restriction.
- 8.4 To assess the viability and justification of an Article 4 Direction allowing control over demolition of, or inappropriate alterations to, dwelling-houses and other buildings.

9. CHARACTER SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Central Valley Area and Vistas

- 9.1 Mears Ashby is unique in the Borough of Wellingborough, if not the entire county, in having such extensive tracts of unspoilt open land contained within its urban form. This central valley, together with the open space east of Lady's Lane, plays a fundamental part in defining the character and appearance of the conservation area. Albeit comprising private land, it can be viewed and enjoyed from various surrounding vantage points, a selection of which are shown on the Appraisal Plan with the "Vista" eye symbol. As suggested above, it is regrettable that the valley area has been to some extent compromised by arbitrary residential development since the 1960s, and any further proposals of this nature ought therefore to be looked at critically in the interests of maintaining the valley's strong sense of place.
- 9.2 The eye symbol also records various points within the conservation area from which the church tower can be readily viewed. It is suggested that these viewing points should be taken account of in the consideration of planning applications for new development in the village.

Historic Built Form

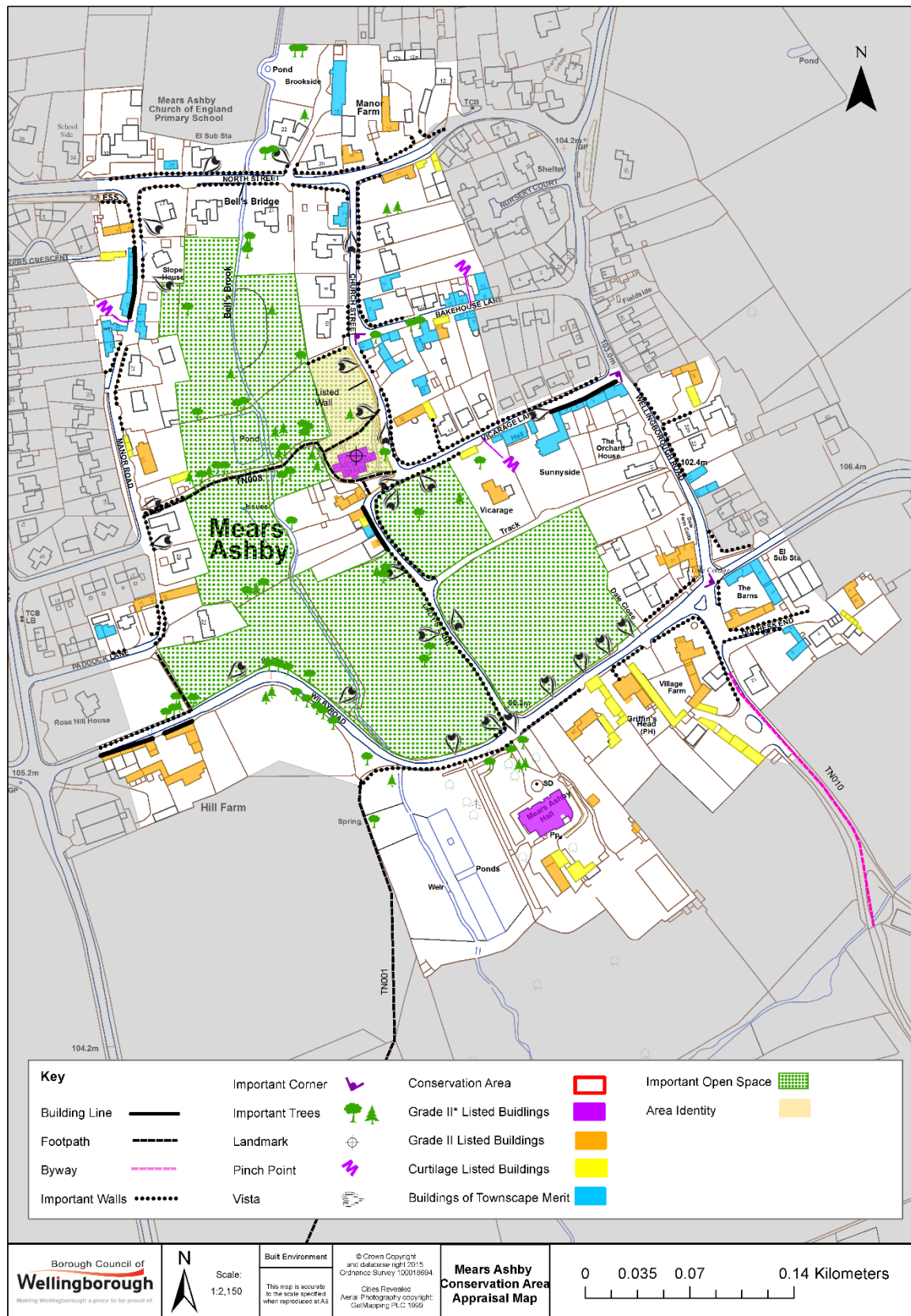
- 9.3 The other key component of the conservation area's character is the form and appearance of its constituent historic buildings. The 1952 Ordnance Survey map records the position before the later 20th and 21st century expansion. It shows an irregular, informal, organic built form characterized by vernacular narrow-depth cottages and barns, typically gable-on to the road either at rear-edge-of-highway or slightly set back, or eaves-on to the road at rear-edge-of-highway. The majority of the cottages, whether listed or otherwise, are 2-storey in height with a lesser proportion at 2.5 or 1.5 storeys. Detached properties set back within their own grounds also occasionally occur, such as at 18 North Street, 30 Wilby Road, the Manor House and the Vicarage, and there is a particular contrast with the two examples of polite architecture in the form of Mears Ashby Hall and the parish church.

- 9.4 Narrowing in the street scene occurs in Manor Road, Vicarage Lane and Bakehouse Lane, creating a pleasing sense of enclosure (see “Pinch Point” symbols). Also, “Important Corners” (see notation symbol), which assist with legibility of the urban form, are noted at Wilby Road/Wellingborough Road, Wellingborough Road/Vicarage Lane and Church Street/Bakehouse Lane.
- 9.5 Sections 4 and 6, above, cover the historic buildings’ distinctive architectural features, bringing out, for example, the preponderance of local Mears Ashby Stone and natural roof covering in the form of slate and clay tiles. For a village the size of Mears Ashby the survival of thatch in the case of four cottages is particularly notable. Free-standing walling along back-edge-of-highway is another important element of the conserved environment. Mainly in local stone, these help to visually link the historic buildings in the street scene and their preservation should therefore be treated as no less important.

Future Development

- 9.6 Statutory law requires the character or appearance of conservation areas to be either preserved or enhanced by new development. It is suggested in section 7, above, that in several cases since the inception of the conservation area in 1977 this has not been the case. New development in the village should respond to the authentic vernacular characteristics detailed above, both in terms of the irregularity of layout/plan form and in the incorporation of traditional materials and architectural embellishment. This is not to say, however, that all new (or replacement) development should necessarily be historicist in style, and contemporary design solutions in particular situations should not be ruled out.

Mears Ashby Conservation Area Appraisal Map



Mears Ashby Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document



Adopted February 2017

SUMMARY

This Village Design Statement (VDS) seeks to reflect the wishes of the inhabitants of Mears Ashby, providing guidance as to how the village and its surrounds should develop in relation to the design of any future development.

In May 2014, following a period of promoting awareness of the value of such a document, including an open meeting in the village hall sponsored by the Parish Council, a detailed questionnaire was delivered to 215 households seeking views on the important aspects of design and character within the village and Parish. Everybody in the Parish from teenager upwards was invited to submit a response - in total 119 responses were received. Together with a thorough desktop and field assessment of the character of the Parish, including a recently produced Conservation Area Appraisal, the Parish Council, assisted by the Borough Council of Wellingborough, were then able to identify a list of appropriate guidelines that reflect both the aspirations of residents and the defined character of the village and the Parish.

There are three distinct geographical areas covered by the recommendations in this document: the conservation area in the centre of the village, the remaining village and then the outlying area within the parish boundary. Whilst this VDS covers the entirety of Mears Ashby Parish it provides the most extensive level of guidance around the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area covering the village core. Much of this guidance picks up on the detailed observations made within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

The protection of the intrinsic rural setting and open green spaces within the village is seen by the inhabitants as being extremely important. Therefore where development does occur, many of the key areas of guidance included in this VDS will seek to ensure that development is designed to fit the traditional, rural village setting that has prevailed here for centuries. The design guidelines applicable to the village can be found in the highlighted boxes and supported by illustrative material where appropriate. Together, they are intended to ensure that the appearance and quality of build in the village and its environs respects and reflects the elements of Mears Ashby that lend themselves to its rural charm and cherished character.



The Manor House, Manor Road



The Old Red Lion, North Street



A newly built dwelling,
North Street

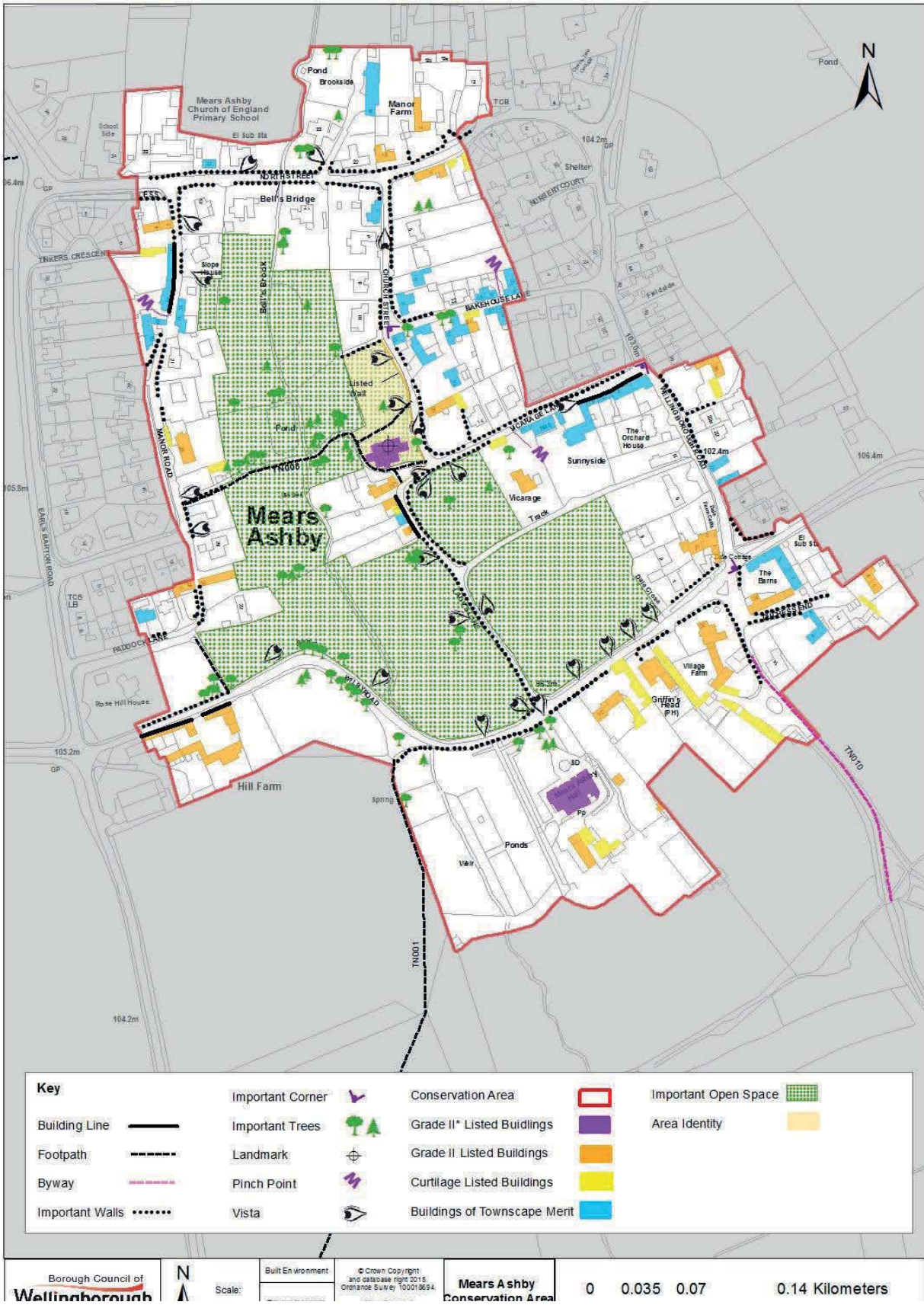
General Key

- Parish Boundaries selection
- Byway
- Bridle Way
- Footpath
- Conservation Areas selection

Landscape Character Key

- Clay Plateau
- Rolling Ironstone Valley Slopes
- Urban

Conservation Area Map 2



1.0 BACKGROUND

What is a Village Design Statement (VDS)?

- 1.1 A VDS is a document prepared by a village, usually with the support of the local planning authority, to identify the most important characteristics of a village or village area and provide guidelines to steward appropriate development in keeping with the local environment.
- 1.2 In the event that a VDS is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by the local planning authority then it can provide a material consideration of weight when determining planning applications in the area it covers. The VDS would be considered 'supplementary' as it will provide a greater level of local detail that will enable officers to more accurately interpret the policies of the development plan encouraging quality, locally appropriate design.

Who is it for?

- 1.3 In a small Parish, such as Mears Ashby, change is brought about not only by developments of new housing but also by smaller alterations and extensions to homes and gardens, open spaces, trees, footpaths and walls. These smaller alterations can change the look and feel of the whole village but should still be regarded in this context as development. This VDS has therefore been produced to be read and used by anyone making a relevant change to the existing fabric of the village. This will principally include anybody preparing a planning application that will result in design or character considerations and the officers charged with determining the application. Ideally it will also influence the approach taken by anybody undertaking works allowed under permitted development rights.

How will it be used?

- 1.4 This VDS is to be adopted by Borough Council of Wellingborough as a Supplementary Planning Document. The guidelines set out within this document will comprise a material consideration when planning applications or other matters relating to the guidance of development in the Parish are being assessed in the future. Principally this VDS will supplement the design policies of the local plan and provide a greater level of detail in terms of how these policies should be applied in the context of Mears Ashby.
- 1.5 The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Policy 11) limits development in villages to small scale infill on suitable sites where this would not materially harm the character of the settlement and residential amenity. Policies 2, 3 and 8 also set out various criteria to ensure that development respects and enhances local character by ensuring that development responds to its topography, wider context, the landscape and historic setting within which it is located and the local streetscape. This VDS will supplement those policies by helping to define the local character in the parish. Mears Ashby is also host to an extensive conservation area covering much of the central core of the village. To a degree, the guidelines set out in this VDS will facilitate the successful management of the conservation area and ensure that any new development at least preserves but where possible enhances its setting.

Mears Ashby from the air, Copyright: Google Earth Inc.



2.0 THE EVOLUTION OF MEARS ASHBY

- 2.1 Mears Ashby is a village located approximately 5 miles to the west of the town of Wellingborough, lying in the centre of its parish where four main roads converge: that from Northampton enters the south side and a road crossing the parish from east to west connects the village with Wilby and Sywell.
- 2.2 Prior to the Norman Conquest, Mears Ashby was part of a Saxon Estate owned by the theyn Bondi. The place-name “Ash-by” or “Ash-tree by” relates to a “farm by the trees” and its early purpose was to supply timber for Bondi’s wider estate.^{1 2}
- 2.3 At the time of the Domesday Book (1086) the village is recorded as comprising 20 households and a manor. The total population was, therefore, perhaps 100, growing crops in the arable land and grazing animals beside the streams. The farmland would have been on the lighter soils to the south while the area to the north was still extensively forested. There would have been sufficient space for that population on the east side of the village brook.

Bakehouse Lane: Then and now



- 2.4 In the first centuries after the Conquest, the village grew to its present shape of many lanes and small paddocks. Perhaps the earliest development was a lane linking two Roman sites (to north and south) making today’s Wellingborough Road. This had a string of crofts along its east side like any village street.

¹ The suffix “by” means a farmstead, indicating a Danish presence.

² W G Callis *Mears Ashby: From Ice Age to Space Age*, 1991 (unpublished).

- 2.5 Two separate manors were formed in this period. Whilst it is not clear from records which came first, an Elizabethan survey³ refers, firstly, to the “Church Close” (land north of the churchyard, which was much smaller then) “whereon stood the north manor of the lord.” The site of the church may have been chosen for its defensive position relative to the bank of the stream and perhaps the first lord after the Conquest settled there and put up a small wooden church beside his home, later building a bigger manor house a little to the north. Church Street from that point to North Street is well-sunken, showing great age. It would lead from the north manor house to the farm complex (Manor Farm) of that owner.⁴

View down Church Street to North Street



From Wilby Road across site of Ancient Manor to Old Vicarage



Manor Farm House



Manor House Pond



- 2.6 A royal commission survey⁵ refers to a small rectangular pond in the valley bottom “much altered by recent landscaping, bounded by a massive earthen dam 2 metres high on its downstream side which is thought to be medieval in origin.” The pond, still in existence today in the grounds of the present Manor House (on Manor Road), lies approximately 50 metres west of Church Close and may have been associated with the original North Manor House.

³ *Survey of the Manor of Ashbie Maris, 1577 for the Rt Hon Wm Vaux of Harrowden*. Fenland Field Officer, Cambridgeshire Archaeological Committee: *1577 Manorial Survey*. At that time William Vaux held the lordship of Mears Ashby.

⁴ W G Callis op cit

⁵ Royal Commission for the Historic Monuments of England, Vol 2, p109. 1979

- 2.7 With regard to the South Manor House the royal commission survey refers to “Home Close”, west of Dale Farm/Dale Close and opposite the Griffin’s Head public house, and a large square enclosure in the centre bounded by scarps and banks up to 1.5 metres high. The Vaux survey (of which the royal commission appears to have been unaware), however, reveals this as the site of the South Manor House comprising a hall and parlour of 5.5 bays, milk house, kitchen, gelding house, store house, stable all of 6 bays, plus another stable, rye/hay barns of 7 bays, etc. in an estimated 3.5 acre site. William Callis feels that this site is “likely to be of great antiquity” and, as the location of the homestead of the very first head of the community, was in fact the earlier of the two manorial sites.
- 2.8 The village appears to have gradually developed in a westward direction. Several embanked and scarped closes project beyond the existing house plots along the steep valley side immediately west of the church, presumably former closes now abandoned.⁶ Later, as the population grew, the stream was crossed and another street, today’s Manor Road, was added running north-south.⁷
- 2.9 The village’s place-name is thought to have evolved from the early Asbi (Domesday, 1086), through Essebi (1166), Aissebi (1176), Northesseby (1220, probably intended to distinguish it from Castle Ashby to the south), Esseby Mares (1281, marking the addition of the personal surname of Robert de Mares whom king Henry III granted/gave ownership of the Ashby Manor (north half) in 1242), Mares Assheby (1297), Ass Meeres Asshebye (1578), Maires Ashby (1659), and Ashby Mares (1791).⁸ It’s anatomy, therefore, comprises the original Saxon “farm by the trees” with the addition of the surname of a subsequent lord of the manor.
- 2.10 The estimated population at Domesday of 100 had doubled by the time of the Vaux survey of 1577 to approximately 200, based on the record of “47 houses, plus one decayed and one now a stable”. Bridges records “90 families” in 1722 amounting to perhaps 400-450 people, and records for later in that century of 12 full-time farmers and 18 tradesmen, including 3 carpenters, 2 bakers, 2 blacksmiths, 2 tailors, a weaver, a butcher, a mason, a barber, a shoemaker and 2 publicans, paint a picture of a healthy and growing community with a strong socio-economic base.⁹
- 2.11 Official population figures compiled in the subsequent centuries show numbers steadily growing from this level, but suffering a set-back around the turn of and in the first half of the 20th century from which it is only gradually recovering, viz:
- | | |
|------|------------|
| 1821 | 442 people |
| 1861 | 525 people |
| 1901 | 367 people |
| 1951 | 333 people |
| 1981 | 416 people |
| 2011 | 442 people |

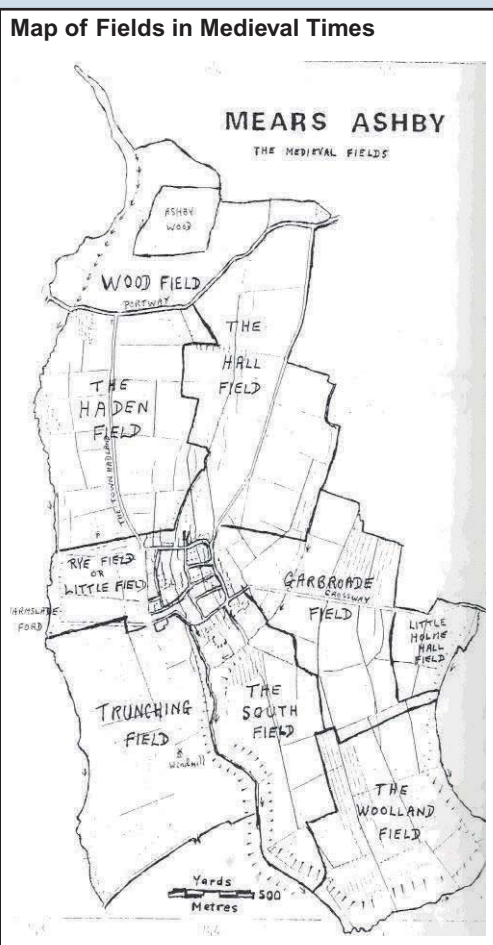
⁶ RCHME op cit

⁷ W G Callis

⁸ from *Place Names of Northamptonshire*, Gover, Mawer and Stenton, 1933

⁹ Bridges ii 137 1722

- 2.12** A high level of building took place in the mid and late 19th century following the Enclosure, reflecting a long period of overall agricultural prosperity for the bigger farmers, the landowners and the clergy, whose income came from farms and glebe rents. Nevertheless, the sharp drop in numbers noted at the beginning of the 20th century was due to the nationwide agricultural depression, with the offer of higher wages in factories and towns, together with homeworking in domestic workshops (e.g. boot and shoe) giving over to full factory production.
- 2.13** Resultantly, historic map coverage of the village shows that it changed very little between the years 1888 and 1952,¹⁰ and that the visually important central valley area had remained undeveloped right up to the middle of the 20th century. The built fabric was laid out at a relatively low density and was characterized by vernacular narrow-depth cottages and barns, the architectural style and layout of which is felt to be locally distinctive.



- 2.14** However, a process of infilling and peripheral village expansion began in the latter half of the 20th century with the 1978 map showing, in particular, encroachment of residential valley development onto the central area south of North Street, east of Manor Road and west of Church Street. Current coverage shows that the loss of open valley land has continued, with additional residential plot development on Church Street and Manor Road and the north side of North Street. This loss is considered to be intrusive and damaging to the character of the natural valley in this part of the conservation area.
- 2.15** Moreover, a significant proportion of the dwelling-houses built in the conservation area over the last 60 years or so have been constructed of mass-produced brick and concrete roofing tiles and with a general absence of craftsman-like architectural detailing. Built development of this type is not locally distinctive and, as such, is damaging to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

¹⁰ The village extent at 1952 roughly coincides with the present conservation area

3.0 CHARACTERISING MEARS ASHBY AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

The local landscape setting

- 3.1** The rural areas of the Parish are predominantly defined by two distinct landscape character areas, both of which abut the main village of Mears Ashby. To the north, the larger rural expanse of the Parish comprises aspects of 'clay plateau' which stretches as far as the A14 corridor. To the south of the village, the landscape comprises 'rolling ironstone valley slopes', a landscape characteristic that forms a band around the northern edge of the Northampton urban area¹¹. These distinct landscape areas can be identified as part of Map 1 of this statement.
- 3.2** Higher parish land in the north and east is covered in Boulder Clay and rises to a height of 122 metres AOD. A band of Lower Estuarine Sands and clays separates this from the slightly lower areas of Northampton Sand. The latter predominates in the west and south and is cut by the steep-sided valleys of south south east-flowing streams where the Upper Lias Clay is exposed down to a height of 76 metre AOD. This area of landscape is characterised by long views over the Sywell Plateau, an area of the countryside that comprises sweeping fields that are only broken by a limited level of tree cover and rural development.

Clay Landscape Panorama (North)



Rolling ironstone valley (South-west)



- 3.3** The land to the south of the village is characterized to a greater extent by its hydrology and watercourses, comprising a greater mix of shallow valleys and wooded hollows. The creation of one such stream by this local geology, the Swanspool Brook (known locally as Bell's Brook), flowing through the village centre, coupled with the availability of a series of adjacent springs and a plentiful supply of well water, appears to be a key factor in the settlement's siting in this particular location.

¹¹ As characterised in the Northamptonshire Current Landscape Character Assessment

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINE 1:

Development in the village should seek to conserve and enhance the expansive, panoramic views to the north. Where possible it should enforce the sense of elevation and separation from the surrounding urban areas through the appropriate siting and scaling of development.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINE 2:

Any development that impacts on views or the character of the rural landscape to the south of the village should conserve and enhance the level of intimacy offered by the number of shallow valleys and hollows created by the small streams that run through and past the village.

LANDSCAPE GUIDELINE 3:

All development on the edge of the village should maintain a vibrant and visually appealing urban fringe and should consolidate the role the village plays in characterising the rural area to both the north and south. Any necessary isolated development in the open countryside should similarly respect the landscape character and the rural pattern and form of development identified within the Northamptonshire Current Landscape Character Assessment.

The structure of Mears Ashby Village

- 3.4 The primary component of the village's structure is the natural valley running north-south through its centre, terminating at both ends in the open countryside, with Bell's Brook flowing at the bottom. The street pattern which developed around this feature is roughly square in shape, described by Manor Road, North Street, Wellingborough Road and Wilby Road, with the intervening Church Street/Lady's Lane respecting the alignment of the brook. The settlement's form is, therefore, described as clustered or "agglomerated" with the various zones or elements linked together, rather like a jigsaw puzzle, and morphologically interconnected by the striking central natural valley.
- 3.5 This valley area is described in the Vaux survey of 1577 as including 19 small enclosures called variously "close", "field", "croft", "spinney" or "pingel/pyghtle", indicating that historically the village had a significant proportion of open land within its urban structure. The modern village is characterized by the memory of this generous medieval open land in the various paddocks, fields and treed areas on either side of the brook and also on the east side of Lady's Lane, the site of the south manor.

- 3.6 The existence of a small village green immediately west of the church (later absorbed into the garden of Church House in the 19th century)^{12 13} suggests that the area around the northern manor house and the church emerged as the settlement's social nucleus. Certainly today, viewed from the vantage point of the churchyard, there is a clear sense of being at the heart of the settlement.

URBAN PATTERN GUIDELINE 1:

Any development within the village should respect the urban form and draw cues from the historic patterns of development described above. Development should seek to respect and retain the nucleated form of the village, based around the manor house and the church area - see photos below.



"Mears Ashby is unique in the Borough of Wellingborough, if not the entire county, in having such extensive tracts of unspoilt open land contained within its urban form. This central valley, together with the open space east of Lady's Lane, plays a fundamental part in defining the character and appearance of the conservation area."

¹² W G Callis

¹³ The village pump stood there and its well is now under the roadway

Notable buildings

- 3.7** Mears Ashby is home to a number of listed buildings, all of which lie within the extensive conservation area covering the core of the village. Whilst no listed buildings exist around the village fringe lying outside the conservation area designation or within the open countryside, development in these areas still has the ability to impact on the setting and appearance of listed structures through their contribution to or deleterial effect on short and long views alike.
- 3.8** Listed buildings in Mears Ashby (see purple, orange and yellow colouration on the village map), commonly feature:
- Squared or regular coursed lias¹⁴ with either ironstone or limestone;
 - Ashlar gable parapets and kneelers; occasional gabled roof dormers (see Church House and 14 North Street);
 - Chimney stacks generally in brick and stone together, but also seen exclusively in either brick or stone, located variously at ridge or gable end. Occasional ashlar stacks with moulded stone cornice (see 31 Lady's Lane);
 - Wooden casement windows with wood lintels; stone mullion windows, occasionally including transoms (see The Old Vicarage). Occasional cast-iron glazing bars (see Griffin's Head PH);
 - Roofs mainly slate or plain tile; pantile; thatch at 25 Lady's Lane, 5 Duchess End, 16 North Street and 1 Duchess End; Collyweston slate at Mears Ashby Hall and dovecote; and corrugated metal (see barn at 30 Wilby Road).
- 3.9** Apart from the Grade II* listed parish church dating from the 12th century¹⁵ the listed buildings are fairly evenly spread out within the conservation area, with identifiable clustering perhaps in the Wilby Road between the Hall and Duchess End, and, again, properties east and south of the church. They mainly comprise Grade II post-medieval domestic examples either of 2 or 2.5 storeys (the majority) or of 1.5 storeys (the remainder). Many (68%) of the Grade II listed buildings date from the period 1685-1750 and this is likely in part to reflect the relative political and economic stability at that time which gave people the confidence to invest in land and property, but may equally be related to developments in building construction techniques and the survivability of more robust solid stone buildings.
- 3.10** In many cases primary listed buildings will have adjuncts within their historic or present freeholds including outbuildings, barns and boundary walling. These are termed "curtilage-listed" buildings and the fabric enjoys equivalent statutory protection to that afforded to the primary or "nominal" listed building. These are shown in yellow colouration on the Appraisal Map.
- 3.11** Over 40 additional buildings have been identified as "of note" (unlisted but considered as character enhancers) as shown in blue colouration on the Appraisal Map. These buildings are mainly 18th and 19th century in date, of local stone or brick and with slate roof covering. Whilst not at present capable of being

¹⁴ Generic geological term covering types of ironstone, oxidised sandstone and Mears Ashby "Pendle" stone

¹⁵ Note: all dating refers to buildings' first construction phase

considered for statutory listing, they are recognised as examples of good quality vernacular architecture. Taken together with the various listed and curtilage-listed buildings, they help to create a strong sense of place, making a positive contribution to the listed buildings' settings and to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole.

CHARACTER GUIDELINE 1:

Any development in the village should ensure that the character contribution of the listed buildings and buildings of note identified on the village map should be maintained through the sympathetic treatment of their setting.

CHARACTER GUIDELINE 2:

In the instance that any new development seeks to utilise traditional materials and design it should draw cues from any nearby listed buildings or buildings of note that have been identified as providing a positive contribution to the character of the village.

Materials

- 3.12 Common materials and features of special architectural or historic interest that are identified by both the Conservation Area Appraisal prepared for the village, and through the sentiments of residents, include the following, with some typical examples given in brackets:-

Walling

- 3.13 Squared or regular coursed lias, often featuring Mears Ashby "Pendle" stone; ironstone; limestone; stone with brick dressings on corners and window/door surrounds (28 North Street); red stock brick; white, cream or grey-painted render to front or gable stonework or brickwork.

Miscellaneous Features

- 3.14 Ashlar gable parapets and kneelers; decorative brick detail at eaves (double row of stretchers) and verge (15 Church Street); plain verge; exposed rafters on eaves; decorative verge weather-boarding in matt black (16 Manor Road), or plain boarding in white; chamfered engineering brick string course at 1st floor level; timber gabled porch canopy; hipped open double porch; chimney stacks in brick or stone or combinations thereof; occasional ashlar stacks with moulded cornice; 2-stage chimneys with single or double decorative cornice (Sunnyside, Vicarage Lane); clay/vitreous chimney pots; pyramidal hipped roof (20 Manor Road); flat-roofed or gabled dormers at eaves (wall-plate) or on purlin.

Free-Standing Walling

- 3.15 Stone with engineering brick or flat stone capping; occasional brick. "Important walls" are shown in a black dotted notation on the Appraisal Map, and walls which are themselves listed are indicated accordingly.



Fig A



Fig B



Fig C

- Fig A: gabled roof dormers
- Fig B: moulded stone cornice
- Fig C: occasional cast iron glazing bars
- Fig D: thatched roof
- Fig E: collyweston roof
- Fig F: corrugated iron roof
- Fig G: open land
- Fig H: painted render
- Fig I: stone with brick corner
- Fig J: verge weather boarding



Fig D



Fig E



Fig G



Fig F



Fig H



Fig I



Fig J



Fig J

**Fig K****Fig L****Fig M****Fig N****Fig P****Fig Q**

- Fig K: pyramid hipped roof
Fig L: triple roman clay tile
Fig M: cast iron window
Fig N: narrowing street scene
Fig P: local stone
Fig Q: thatch/ironstone/pantile
roof

Roofing

- 3.16 Predominantly slate and plain tile; clay pantile; thatch; Collyweston slate; corrugated metal; triple-Roman clay tile (outbuildings at 11 North Street).

Windows and Doors

- 3.17 Ledged and braced tongue-and-groove timber door, white painted; plank door in white; yellow-painted timber doors; cast iron windows (5/7 Paddocks Lane); timber casement windows with glazing bars or “diamond” leading; stone mullioned windows, occasionally with transoms (31 Lady’s Lane and The Vicarage).

Use of stone

- 3.18 Mears Ashby Stone is part of the Northampton Sand (Duston Member) geological formation known as “Pendle”, and is a limestone which forms good freestone. It is pale yellow in colour and best seen in Mears Ashby Hall where it was used in large ashlar blocks and is relatively intricately carved in the porch. The stone was also used for the Vicarage and the Callis’ farmhouse at 30 Wilby Road.
- 3.19 However, many of the historic buildings in Mears Ashby consist of rubble-stones that are represented by a mixture of ironstones, limonitic (oxidized) sandstone and Mears Ashby Stone, hence the use of the generic term “lias” in the various listing citations. Of note, 31 Lady’s Lane is constructed mainly of local Mears Ashby Stone ashlar and rubble-stone.¹⁶

MATERIALS GUIDELINE 1:

It will generally be expected that the materials adopted in any new build development or the extension of existing properties relate to the palette of materials described in this statement as being characteristic of Mears Ashby. This will be of particular importance in the conservation area or its setting, in the wider rural area

MATERIALS GUIDELINE 2:

In the case of extensions, particular attention should be given to the use of materials that match (or at the very least complement) the main body of the existing building. This guideline relates to the way these materials are used to construct the extension, such as the pattern and depth of coursing, the size of brick or stone block or the design and rhythm present in the construction of any new roof.

¹⁶ *Strategic Stone Study: A Building Stone Atlas of Northamptonshire* English Heritage (Historic England) 2011

Characteristic design

- 3.20 One of the key aspects of Mears Ashby village, and the conservation area in particular, is the form and appearance of its constituent historic buildings. The 1952 Ordnance Survey map records the position before the later 20th and 21st century expansion. It shows an irregular, informal, organic built form characterized by vernacular narrow-depth cottages and barns, typically gable-on to the road either at rear-edge-of-highway or slightly set back or eaves-on to the road at rear-edge-of-highway. The majority of the cottages, whether listed or otherwise, are 2-storey in height with a lesser proportion at 2.5 or 1.5 storeys. Detached properties set back within their own grounds also occasionally occur, such as at 18 North Street, 30 Wilby Road, the Manor House and the Vicarage, and there is a particular contrast with the two examples of polite architecture in the form of Mears Ashby Hall and the parish church.

Mears Ashby Hall



Pinch point in Paddock Lane



- 3.21 Narrowing in the street scene occurs in Manor Road, Vicarage Lane and Bakehouse Lane, creating a pleasing sense of enclosure (see “Pinch Point” symbols). Also, “Important Corners” (see notation symbol), which assist with legibility of the urban form, are noted at Wilby Road/Wellingborough Road, Wellingborough Road/Vicarage Lane and Church Street/Bakehouse Lane.
- 3.22 For a village the size of Mears Ashby the survival of thatch in the case of four cottages is particularly notable. Free-standing walling along back-edge-of-highway is another important element of the conserved environment. Mainly in local stone, these help to visually link the historic buildings in the street scene and their preservation should therefore be treated as no less important.

DESIGN GUIDELINE 1:

Any new development in the Parish will be expected to respect the rural scale of both the village and its hinterland and adopt a design of a bulk, footprint, orientation and massing that is in keeping with its location.

DESIGN GUIDELINE 2:

Whilst innovative contemporary design within the Parish is welcomed it should be of a high quality that similarly complements the scale and character of its surroundings. This will be of particular importance in the rural area and within the conservation area and its setting.

DESIGN GUIDELINE 3:

Any small scale additions, either to or within the curtilage of the existing buildings of the village, which may if inappropriately sited result in a cluttered street scene should be hidden from view from any public highway as far as possible. Such additions include but are not limited to built refuse stores, outbuildings, solar panels and satellite dishes.

Rights of way

- 3.23 Whilst most parts of the village are well linked by footpaths, rights of way and kerb-side pavements there are areas where safe passage by foot is hindered due to the lack of designated pedestrian routes with residents on foot often having to share surfaces with cars. There is a view that there should be pavements throughout the village enabling pedestrians to walk everywhere safely. An illustration of this is Pell's Hill where it becomes dangerous as the pavement runs out just past Lady's Lane.
- 3.24 Pavements also have a traffic calming effect: with the level of traffic through the village, particularly early morning and late afternoon, at school delivery and collection times, pavements become important to the safety of pedestrians and the narrowing of the road restricts the speed of traffic. Their presence can, however, also have an unfortunate impact on the safe flow of traffic as motorists often use them as an informal opportunity to park their cars with the stationary vehicles often then encroaching onto the road.

A danger to pedestrians: Pell's Hill (L)
North Street at School time (R)



Church Walk



RIGHTS OF WAY GUIDELINE 1:

Any new development should respect, maintain and ideally enhance the network of footpaths throughout the village, including kerb-side pavements. Where new pavements and footpaths are to be provided they should once again make reference to the materials used in the construction of the rights of way that they are to join up with.

Open space and trees

- 3.25 Mears Ashby is unique in the Borough of Wellingborough, if not the entire county, in having such extensive tracts of unspoilt open land contained within its urban form. This central valley, together with the open space east of Lady's Lane, plays a fundamental part in defining the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 3.26 This central swathe of land is primarily paddock land which is still stocked. It affords a view for many of the properties across the valley which runs through the centre of the village and gives a spacious feeling, echoing its agrarian roots. Although the various tracts of land (shown as "Important Open Space" in green dot colouration on the village map) are not accessible by the public, they constitute a unique visual amenity as a dramatic verdant backdrop to the built environment in the remainder of the conservation area.

"Mears Ashby is also host to an extensive conservation area covering much of the central core of the village. To a degree, the guidelines set out in this VDS will facilitate the successful management of the conservation area and ensure that any new development at least preserves but where possible enhances its setting."

Views across:

To church from Pell's Hill; Central valley from Lady's Lane; South from Church Path



- 3.27 Many of the important trees in the conservation area are located in this central open area, and these are shown indicatively on the village map as either deciduous or coniferous specimens. The contiguous churchyard, which constitutes quasi-public space, contributes positively to local character and is duly recognized on the map under the “Area Identity” notation for its role as both a vantage point for enjoying the valley landscape as well as a place of quiet contemplation.
- 3.28 In 2013 a donation of 400 sapling trees was granted to the village, as part of the Jubilee Woods Scheme and these are to be planted on the rough ground at the far end of the 6 acre sports field, situated at the Earls Barton Road/Sywell/ crossroads establishing a ‘Jubilee Wood’ to commemorate of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in a similar way to oak trees located on the green at the bottom of Pells Hill, planted to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee and on the corner of Highfield Road and North Street planted in 2013.

OPEN SPACE AND TREES GUIDELINE 1:

The important areas of open space in the village should be respected and their value should not be eroded by the encroachment development.

OPEN SPACE AND TREES GUIDELINE 2:

All new development should seek to maintain any existing areas of mature vegetation or trees that help provide the village with its sylvan and predominantly rural character. Additional planting will be encouraged along with the creation of new areas of open space that add biodiversity value to the Parish.