

Orton on the Hill

Conservation Area Appraisal

Orton on the Hill was a well established village long before it was mentioned in the Domesday Book as Wortone. The first Orton Hall is thought to have been built around 1115 and at some period is thought to have belonged to the Knights Templar. The Manor, consisting of the Hall, the church, the village and much of the surrounding land was given to Merivale Abbey in 1148. The Cistercian monks organised the land into a number of granges which included Le Grange, now Lea Grange, Pinwall, Newhouse and Moor, now Moorbarne. Today they are outlying farms encircling Orton.

Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Orton passed into the ownership of the Bradshaw's for about 100 years. Around 1650, the Steeles, later to become the Steele-Perkins, purchased Orton Hall and became the Lords of the Manor for the next 250 years. In 1786, the medieval Hall was demolished by Samuel Steele Perkins and rebuilt in the new fashionable Georgian style. The Hall was eventually sold by the family in 1918 and the estate was broken up. Although the hall remained a private house for 40 years, it was demolished in the late 1960's.

Setting

The village location is defined by a group of relatively isolated woodland trees set in open countryside at the top of a high ridge orientated east-west. It is approached by narrow straight roads from Sheepy to the south and Twycross and Atherstone along the ridge. This unique setting permits magnificent views all around but particularly across the Warwickshire plain to the north-west. With this exception and the large open field of Orton Park on the north east side, the field system adjoining Orton is characterised by small fields and continuous hedgerows. These features extend into the village to reinforce its rural character.

Gateways

From any distance or approach, the village conservation area appears to be set in woodland. Mature trees are grouped at the entrances to the settlement and also form a stand around the site of the former Orton Hall. Only the Conservation Area entrance along Main Street differs because of the impact of modern infill development which produces an urban feel.

Character Statement

The village is divided into two distinct areas, each with its own character. The older part of the village, includes the medieval church of St Edith, a Grade I listed building, and the area around The Green and Pipe Lane. This is characterised by a relatively unplanned organic pattern of buildings which are separated from each other by distance, green spaces and continuous hedges.

The second area lies along Main Street and comprises continuous frontage development of differing scales and from different periods.

Appearance

Until the demolition of The Hall, the area around The Green was the traditional centre of the village. This important space lies between the site of The Hall, the Vicarage and St Edith's church. Some distance away to the south-east, in an arc with the Hall as its focus, are the principle village farms. These included Home Farm, Lower Farm, Peggs Farm, Shaw Farm and Church Farm. In recent times, following the loss of the Hall, the spaces between farms, particularly along Main Street, have been infilled with new dwellings to the detriment of the traditional character of the settlement. Main Street has been particularly badly affected because of the modern unsympathetic nature of this development.

Generally along Pipe Lane and around the village green, the dispersed nature of the farms has been retained. It is important to the character of the conservation area that the large green spaces between these groups of buildings are retained. The farm clusters themselves follow the traditional pattern of attached buildings along the sides of a yard with the house being sited closest to the road.

The farmsteads

The principle building at Church Farm is a thatched medieval timber framed structure with a small brick extension from the Victorian period. The original courtyard form of the farm has been lost and only a reconstructed southern wing and the farmhouse remain. Until the turn of the last century this farm stood alone on the edge of a road linking the village green to the Warton Road junction. The land to the north west of the church has been infilled by inappropriate modern development.

Hall Farm, lies a short distance to the south and is directly accessed from the village green. This farmhouse in addition to medieval timber framing also includes eyebrow windows which are common in the wider area. The original form of the farmyard has been retained with buildings forming three sides.

Peggs Farm, at the western end of Pipe Lane is also part timber framed indicating its medieval origins. This farm is defined by the farmhouse and a return wing on its western side.

Lower Farm, which also fronts the road, to the east along Pipe Lane, has also a part timber framed building. The yard layout is similar to Peggs Farm, but the yard is more clearly defined by agricultural buildings to the east and south.

Two further farms, Moore's Farm and Home Farm, are located to the east of the junction of Main Street and Sheepy Lane. Both have retained many of their former farm buildings although several have been converted into dwellings.

Moore's Farm lies tight to the road intersection with brick buildings forming an easily identifiable yard enclosure. Access into the yard was through an opening between the farm house and a large brick barn. The farm house is a key building in the Conservation Area. It reinforces the settlements agricultural origins when approaching from the south, but it has suffered from inappropriate changes to its appearance.

Home Farm is the last of the village farms and lies adjacent to Moore's Farm but separated from it by a narrow passage. This building has retained its clay tiled roof, and flat brick frontage on a low brick plinth. Its fine traditional details include brick chimneys, simple casement windows with segmental brick arched lintels, keystones and projecting brick sills. Its outbuildings include two

fine brick barns also on the road side and defining the southern edge of the yard, a dovecote.

During the Victorian period the village school, the schoolhouse and the Rectory were added to the settlement's stock of buildings. Both the school, constructed 1834 on Pipe Lane and the nearby schoolhouse are gabled single storey brick structures with dentil eaves. The schoolhouse itself has been extended and rendered in the recent past but both retain their clay tiled roofs.

The Rectory (now called The Gables) is an impressive building standing behind fine Victorian gates in its own grounds on the south side of The Green. It is a two and a half storey building with three prominent gables, chimneys and Georgian style windows although it has been subsequently rendered. Its gardens include several fine mature trees.

Building Style, Scale and Detail

Buildings in the conservation area fall into three distinct categories.

- Simple vernacular buildings often incorporating medieval timber framing and brick extensions. These are low buildings and are comparatively shallow, often being only one room deep. They have steeply pitched continuous gabled roofs of plain clay tiles punctured by brick chimneys. Windows at first floor are tucked under the eaves and are smaller than those at ground floor which normally have projecting brick sills. Their external appearance is varied and reflects the changes which have occurred over their lifetime. These may include a mixture of brick and stone plinths of differing heights, irregular pattern of openings, different sized openings and large areas of blank walls. However the modern restoration techniques of smooth render, standard plastic windows, large rear extensions and front porches will change this appearance.
- Victorian estate buildings with red brick and mottled pink bricks and plain clay tiles give these buildings continuity throughout the conservation area. There are only a few examples of alternative external finishes which include painted brick and render (Moore's Farm and the School house). Thatch and natural slate are not characteristic roofing materials in the settlement although there are isolated examples such as

Church Farm. These Victorian buildings are two rooms deep with higher clay tiled gabled roofs again broken by ridge top chimneys. Decorative brickwork includes dentil eaves courses, segmental arched lintels with keystones and projecting brick sills. Window openings are regularly spaced and hold three full height opening casements that are deeper at ground floor.

- Post Second World War properties, principally bungalows are set in large plots. They have shallow pitched hipped roofs with concrete roof tiles, large picture windows and integral double garages set well back from the edge of the road.

Boundary Treatments

With the exception of the area around the church, boundary treatments are generally low hedges or occasional wooden picket fences which reinforce the village's rural appearance. At the centre of the conservation area, along the east side of The Green are the remains of the high brick wall of the gardens to the former Hall partly overgrown with ivy. These contrast with boundaries of the churchyard and the modern properties nearby defined by low dry stone walls reinforced with shrub and tree planting which serve to screen the properties.

Surface treatments

Traditional gravel surfaces have been retained around the village green, and elsewhere road and path surfacing, although modern, in most areas is undefined along its edges. Where modern street lights, concrete kerbs and pavements have been introduced, particularly along Main Street, they have urbanised the street scene to the detriment of the village character.

Contribution of Spaces and Natural Elements

The dispersed nature of Orton has provided many large areas of green space and opportunities for deciduous forest type trees to be retained. Wide verges and triangles of grass at road junctions also enhance its rural appearance. Only occasionally have leylandii hedges and trees had an unfortunate visual impact.

FACTORS HAVING A NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Buildings of Poor Visual Quality

At the eastern entrance to the conservation area, a mixed group of traditional and modern development detracts from the prevailing scale, form and design of buildings in the Conservation Area. Although these buildings reflect their period of construction or have been recently improved, they display qualities and features which are out of character with traditional forms in the conservation area. Elsewhere, with some exceptions, where modern buildings have been introduced, they are generally sited away from the public space at the rear of plots which reduces their impact.

Potential development area

This area would accommodate some development if closely related to the existing group of historic buildings. The area could include the existing bungalow to the east utilising the existing vehicular access.

Enhancement

The enhancement of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area can be defined as the reinforcement of the qualities that provided the special interest and which warranted designation. It may be through the sympathetic development of sites identified in the detailed analysis of the area as opportunity or neutral sites; it may involve physical proposals or the application of sensitive, detailed development control over extensions and alterations. Areas which warrant special attention for enhancement are marked on the Conservation Area plan.

GENERAL CONSERVATION AREA GUIDANCE, PLANNING CONTROLS AND POLICIES

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

- Retain listed buildings and buildings of local interest.

- Ensure new development contributes positively to the character or appearance of the conservation area in terms of siting, scale, design and materials used.
- Ensure house extensions comply with the Borough Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- Resist development proposals in key areas, which have been identified on the map.
- Ensure the consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over proposals to alter former farm buildings, yards and jittys
- Ensure important views of the church and out into the countryside are protected.

Special attention is given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the appearance of the Conservation Area. Planning Applications in Conservation Areas are separately advertised. The principal effects of the designation of a Conservation Area are summarised as follows:

- Consent is required for the total or substantial demolition of any building exceeding 115 cu metres.
- Applications for Outline Planning permission are not normally acceptable. Full planning applications are likely to be required.

Planning permission is required for:

1. The external cladding of any building with stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles.
2. Extensions beyond a wall forming a side elevation of the original dwelling
3. Extensions of more than one storey which extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwelling.

4. The enlargement of a dwelling consisting of an addition or alteration to its roof forming the principal or side elevation of a dwelling.
5. A satellite dish on chimney, wall or roof fronting a highway.
6. Solar PV or solar thermal equipment on a wall or roof slope forming the principal or side elevation of a dwelling
7. Stand alone solar equipment
8. Installation, alteration or replacement of a chimney, flue or soil vent pipe on a wall or roof slope which fronts a highway and forms either the principal or side elevation of a dwelling.

Anyone proposing works to a tree in a Conservation Area must give six weeks prior written notice to the local planning authority.

These requirements do not cover all aspects of control in Conservation Areas and you are advised to contact the Local Planning Authority for further advice.