



# Vernham Dean Conservation Area Character Appraisal



# 1 Introduction

## Conservation Areas

A conservation area is an area designated by the local planning authority as one of special architectural or historic interest. Once designated, the local authority has a duty<sup>1</sup> to ensure that the character of a conservation area is preserved or enhanced, particularly when considering applications for development.

## Purpose of Character Appraisals

Local authorities are now encouraged to prepare Character Appraisals, providing detailed assessments of their conservation areas. Appraisals enable the local authority to understand the elements that give each area its distinct and unique character, identifying special qualities and highlighting features of particular significance. Those elements include: historic development; landscape and topography; style, type and form of the buildings, and the spaces between buildings; materials, textures, colours and detailing; and less tangible aspects, such as sounds and smells, which can contribute to the special character of the area.

A Character Appraisal is intended as an overview, providing a framework within which individual planning applications can be assessed. It includes text, an appraisal plan, and photographs. It is not realistic to refer to every building or feature within a conservation area – but the omission of any part does not mean that it is without significance.

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1 Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

## 2 The Vernham Dean Conservation Area

### Context

Vernham Dean Conservation Area was originally designated on 4th March 1983 in recognition of its special architectural and historic interest.

Local authorities have a duty to periodically review their conservation areas to ensure that they are still relevant and that boundaries are logical and could be defended if a planning appeal were made. Test Valley Borough Council ('the Council') carried out a comprehensive review of the conservation area and the boundaries were formally amended by the Council's Cabinet on the 18th March 2009. The conservation area includes the historic core of the village.

This Character Appraisal will be a material consideration when assessing future development within the Vernham Dean Conservation Area. It should be read in conjunction with the Council's leaflet 'Conservation Areas: an introduction', and reference should also be made to policies within the Borough Local Plan.

A Character Appraisal is separate from a Village Design Statement. While a Character Appraisal deals specifically with a conservation area and is produced by the Council, a Village Design Statement covers the whole of a village and is prepared by the local community. It is anticipated that both documents will complement each other.

### Location and Population

Vernham Dean lies in north-east Hampshire about ten miles from Andover and fifteen miles south of Newbury and is close to the Wiltshire border. The village lies in a relatively central position within the Parish of Vernham Dean, on a minor road, which runs south-east to the villages of Upton and Hurstbourne Tarrant.

The population of Vernham Dean is 490.<sup>2</sup> The economy of the settlement was formerly based on agriculture, but today the village is predominantly residential, with residents commuting to major centres such as Andover, Basingstoke, Winchester, Southampton and London and there are a growing number of people working from home.

2 From Hampshire County Council's Small Area Population Forecast (2006-based update).



The village has a small range of community facilities including the village hall, a public house, playing fields and primary school.

## Topography and Landscape

Vernham Dean is located within a dry valley bordered by the chalk downland of the Linkenholt Downs to the north and the Rushmore Wooded Downs to the south – all part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Both the gently undulating topography to the north and the escarpment to the south is a result of the underlying chalk, which is responsible for the system of dry river valleys in the landscape. The dominant pattern of local biodiversity and vegetation is open arable areas or unimproved grassland, with some woodland. The woodlands, including important patches of semi-natural ancient woodland, are mainly small copses and game spinneys, often linked together across the landscape by thick hedgerows and shelter belts. This woodland incorporates tree species such as Ash, Field Maple and Yew, with a small incidence of Oak. There is diverse flora and fauna, particularly in those habitats associated with the unimproved grassland areas, which are rich in a mixture of grasses and herbs.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the approach roads into the village are narrow country lanes, often flanked by hedgerows, trees or shrubs, creating a rural character, which is continued into the village itself. It is also notable that little of the village can be seen from the surrounding landscape as it is sited within a 'hollow', except during winter months, when screening trees have no leaves.<sup>4</sup>

The village and surrounding land is designated as countryside in the Local Plan, and strict policies apply to contain development.

## Historic Development of the Village

It is generally considered that the name 'Vernham Dean' may derive from the Old English 'Fearnham' meaning 'bracken estate' or 'land enclosed against the bracken'. It is thought that the village name described the location of the settlement in land surrounded on three sides by some natural obstacle – probably leading to the modern name 'Vernham Dean' meaning 'valley of Vernham'.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Test Valley Community Landscape Character Assessment, Vol 1: Description and Classification of Landscape Character Types and Areas.

4 Village Design Statement for the Parish of Vernhams Dean, Test Valley Borough Council, 2002.

5 The Place Names of Hampshire, by Richard Coates.

There is evidence of Iron Age and Romano British settlement in the surrounding landscape, with a set of Bronze Age hand axes found at Vernham.<sup>6</sup>

At the time of the Domesday Survey, Vernham Dean was part of the neighbouring Manor of Hurstbourne Tarrant ('Esseborne') and did not receive specific mention. The Manor of Vernham Dean was granted by Henry II in about 1177 to Henry de Bernevall and his heirs. Over the next hundred years, the Manor changed hands many times, moving in and out of the Bernevall family. In 1277 the Manor was finally divided into two 'moieties' – legal divisions – named Vernham Dean Manor and West Vernham or Botes Manor. By the end of the fourteenth century Vernham Dean Manor passed into the hands of Winchester College. The College retained principal ownership of the Manor for the next six hundred years. West Vernham or Botes Manor changed hands eighteen times between 1303 and 1575, at which time it was purchased by the trustees of Winchester College, thereby bringing the two manors together under a single ownership.<sup>7</sup>

The village of Vernham Dean is notable in that there is no church and that there appear to be no existing buildings dating earlier than the 17th century. It is possible that the original settlement was at Vernham Street to the northeast, in which the church is located. Local tradition suggests that the main village was moved into the valley on the orders of a priest to save people from the plague.<sup>8</sup>

Until recently Vernham Dean has depended on agriculture and links to the surrounding estates. In the Middle Ages, cereal production reached its height, with great commonly held fields, creating a generally prosperous life for the inhabitants of the area. Like many villages, Vernham Dean experienced considerable changes to surrounding farmland in the 18th century resulting in increased wealth to the large landowners and improved production, but displacement of agricultural labourers and increased poverty among the poorest. Today, a high proportion of the working population now commute to larger centres in Hampshire and Wiltshire, although the village still retains a good range of community facilities and services considering its size.

The late 20th Century and early 21st Century has seen some new development within the village, including new houses on the Dell and Bulpits Hill, north of the centre of the village, and Shepherds Rise to the eastern end of the village.

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6 Village Design Statement for the Parish of Vernhams Dean, Test Valley Borough Council, 2002.

7 Victoria County History, Hampshire.

8 Village Design Statement for the Parish of Vernham Dean, Test Valley Borough Council, 2002.

## Areas of Archaeological Potential

Most settlements contain archaeological evidence, which helps to explain the origins and way of life of earlier inhabitants. An archaeological audit was prepared for Hampshire County Council (HCC) to inform the development control process. The historic core of the village has been identified as an Area of Archaeological Potential<sup>9</sup> (AAP), and these are shown on the Conservation Area map.

The Area of Archaeological Potential covers the whole of the conservation area.<sup>10</sup>

Archaeological remains are likely to be found in the village, and any proposals to carry out works which include ground disturbance are likely to require an archaeological assessment. This may conclude that development is inappropriate or should be modified.

## Form of the Village

The village of Vernham Dean is the main area of settlement in the Parish of Vernham Dean. It is located within a dry valley running east-west, with the land to the north rising to over 200m in height.<sup>11</sup>

The plan form of the village can be described as 'composite' – made up of different types of historic development i.e. not a single plan type. The area either side of Bulpits Hill has developed as a regular row of dwellings within a series of long rectangular plots, running north-south, often with smaller plots subdividing their widths on the main east-west road frontage. Small regular more square shaped plots exist in the 'island' of land enclosed by Back Lane and the east-west road through the village, with buildings generally facing either road frontage. An alleyway exists alongside the former Post Office, bisecting this island area. To the north of Back Lane, at the western end are a series of irregular plots of differing depths and widths.

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9 From the report commissioned by Bournemouth University for Hampshire County Council, Historic Rural Settlement in Basingstoke and Deane, and Test Valley 1999.

10 From the report commissioned by Bournemouth University for Hampshire County Council, Historic Rural Settlement in Basingstoke and Deane, and Test Valley 1999.

11 Historic Rural Settlement in Basingstoke & Deane and Test Valley – An Archaeological and Historical Survey, Bob Edwards.

In the centre of the village, buildings are located around the former village pond. What is particularly important about the manner in which the village has developed into the 21st century is that the historic plot sizes and boundaries have generally been retained, with very little modern infill development within the central area of the village. These boundaries and plot areas are still recognisable in today's landscape and are a feature of the conservation area.

There are a number of entrances into the village, marking the transition from countryside to the built environment, of which three enter directly into the Conservation Area:

1. Western end of the main east-west road – this part of the road, running along the valley bottom, makes a sudden transition between an open arable landscape, with valley sides rising to the north and south, into the historic core of the village, with Edgington House and The Nook creating an end-stop to this view.
2. Eastern end of the main east-west road – there is a more gradual transition into the urban environment when travelling from the east, with the Playing Field and School, leading into a more dense modern area of development to the north of the road and finally arriving at the historic core as building plots appear on the southern side of the road.
3. Bulpits Hill – this road runs from the north into the centre of the village, forming the junction with the main east-west road adjacent to the Green. Modern development has spread north along the road, creating a transition from the countryside into the more urban area, but as the road drops down the valley side into the village centre, the historic core of the village becomes suddenly apparent.

### 3 An Appraisal of the Conservation Area

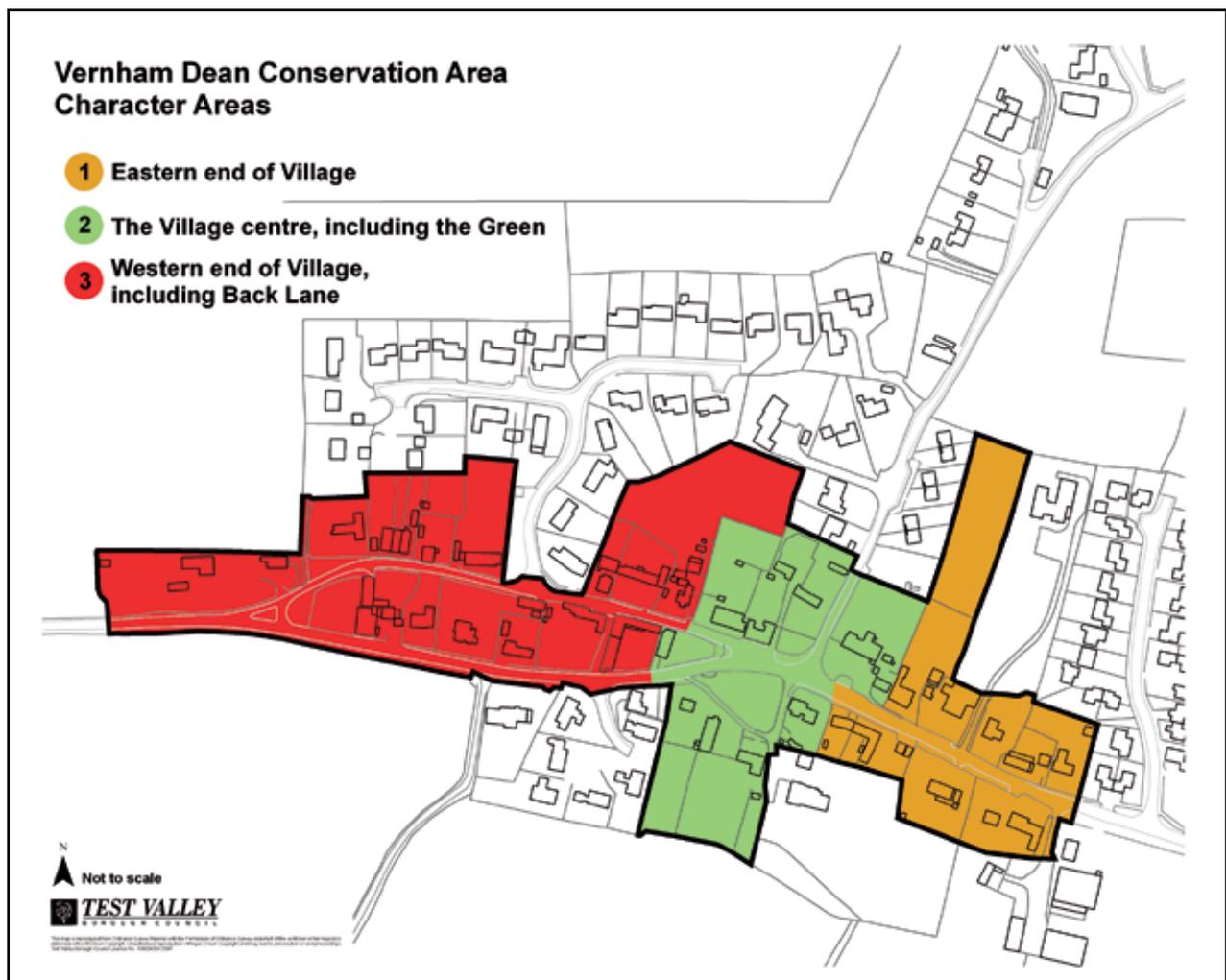
#### Key Characteristics of the Conservation Area

- Lies within with a dry river valley surrounded by chalk downland, incorporating both open arable land and woodland.
- The older buildings date from the 17th century onwards.
- The majority of the historic development is one plot deep and respects the traditional plot layout of the village.
- Newer development is generally clustered into specific areas outside and adjacent to the conservation area boundary – off The Dell, Bulpits Hill, Botisdone Close and Shepherds Rise.
- Most buildings are in residential use.
- There are fewer large 18th and 19th century properties in the village than are normally found in rural villages in Hampshire.
- The majority of buildings within the conservation area are listed buildings.
- There are 22 listed buildings or structures within the Vernham Dean Conservation area boundary, which are all listed Grade II. Listed buildings are shown in red on the Character Appraisal Map at the end of this document.
- There are 18 buildings of local interest within the conservation area boundary. These are unlisted buildings which do not have the same protection as listed buildings but are important nonetheless for the contribution they make to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Buildings of local interest are shown in black on the Character Appraisal Map.
- The majority of older houses were originally small, but many have been altered and extended or amalgamated.
- Older cottages are generally built to a long, low linear floor plan and some are timber framed or built of brick and flint, with thatched or tiled roofs.

- Boundaries to plots are traditionally formed by hedgerows with a few examples of brick, flint or cob walls at the eastern and western ends of the village.
- There are no major key historic buildings (i.e. church or manor), but there are two buildings with a particular community focus within the conservation area: The George Inn and the Village Hall.

## Vernham Dean Conservation Area: Character Areas

In the appraisal Vernham Dean is divided into 3 character areas and these are described separately: the eastern end of the village; the village centre, including the former village pond; the western end of the village, including Back Lane. The quality of their buildings, landscape and setting are then considered together.



## *i Eastern end of the Village*



Appletree Cottage



Poplars Farmhouse



Denver Cottage



The Vernham Dean Millennium Village Hall

This character area incorporates the eastern end of the conservation area and forms the gateway into the village from the east. It is characterised by brick and flint cottages with thatched roofs, some of which are white painted, and are sited within squarish plots fronting the road. The front boundaries consist of either hedges or walls, with mature trees forming backdrops, with views to be gained out towards the south and southeast over Poplars Farm and Haydown.

There are seven Grade II listed buildings within this area: Ann's Cottage and Upton Cottage, Denver Cottage, Apple Tree Cottage, Lilac Cottage, Deers Leap and Poplars Farmhouse. The dates of the building range from the 17th century to the 19th century and all are traditionally thatched. The 17th century buildings, Apple Tree Cottage and Poplars Farmhouse, retain exposed timber framing in gable ends, but the frontages have been faced in the 18th century with brick and flint. The other listed buildings are constructed of brick and flint, with the early 19th century Denver Cottage, being the most imposing with the use of knapped or 'squared' flint, within decorative brick banding. Unfortunately, the brick and flintwork has been painted in the case of several of these listed buildings.

Two buildings of local importance are located within this area – the Village Hall and associated outbuilding. The Vernham Dean Millennium Village Hall is a new brick building in the heart of the village which replaced an old wooden construction.<sup>12</sup> The building is of a high quality design and is set back from the road frontage, thereby not being apparent within views through the wider historic streetscene. Adjacent to the village hall is a small ancillary service building of typical 1930s architecture, which complements the utilitarian character of the village hall.

12 Village Design Statement for the Parish of Vernhams Dean, Test Valley Borough Council, 2002.

A series of important boundary walls exist on the southern side of the road in this area. The walls to Poplars Farmhouse and Haydown appear to be rendered cob with a tiled 'roof' and form a particularly prominent linear feature, especially on entering or exiting the conservation area. It is possible that this wall formed the original farmyard area associated with the farmhouse, which has now been filled in with a bungalow. The wall to Upton Cottage is a small residential front boundary wall constructed of flint.



Cob wall boundary to Poplars Farmhouse

#### Key Characteristics

- Gateway to the conservation area from the east.
- 17th to 19th century thatched brick and flint cottages – all listed buildings.
- Historic plot sizes have been retained.
- Significant boundary wall and boundary hedges.
- Views out over countryside to the south.
- Important community building.

#### *ii The Village centre, including the former Village Pond*

This character area includes the main focal point within the village. The centre of the village is marked by the former village pond, which is surrounded and loosely enclosed by simple 17th, 18th and 19th century vernacular cottages and slightly larger, more important late 19th century dwellings. The buildings are generally located towards the front of plots, with the exception of Dean Cottage and Gardia. The historic plot pattern surrounding this area can still be discerned, with no modern infill having taken place within the conservation area boundary.



View across the former pond

There are six Grade II listed buildings within the character area, including: The George Inn, Pond Cottage, Beeches Farmhouse, Gardia, Apple Thatch and Dean Cottage.



The George Inn

The George Inn is a 17th century timber-framed building, with brick and flint infill panels and a tiled roof, which was formerly thatched. The eastern side of the building has an open timber-framed well-house, which still contains part of the winding gear. The Inn stands within a prominent location on the north-east edge of the open space at the centre of Vernham Dean, with the road to Vernham Street, rising up Bulpits Hill adjacent, and is an important community focal point within the village.



Gardia



Apple Thatch

A typical evolution of many of the smaller cottages is the consolidation of two or three dwellings into one. Both Gardia and Applethatch, (once multiple dwellings), are now single dwellings, fronting on to the former pond. Gardia dates from the 18th century, with later additions, and is constructed of flint with a hipped thatch roof. It is possible that the dwelling has encroached on to land which once formed a larger open space, similar to the buildings on the southern side of this central area. Apple Thatch is a striking thatched 18th century timber framed building, which has been re-faced with decorative brick and flint banding.

In addition, two buildings have been highlighted as being of local interest. Vernham House and Masons both lie off the area formerly occupied by the pond. Masons, to the north is believed to have formerly been a public house (the Masons Arms) and is constructed of brick (which has been painted), and includes a slate roof. A series of prominent dormers, with timber sliding sash windows, punctuate the front roof slope and a decorative dentilled or 'saw tooth' brick corbelling has been incorporated under the eaves – a detail repeated at the top of the two chimneys. Vernham House is an imposing 19th century dwelling, larger in scale than many of the cottages within the village. It is constructed of decorative brick and flint, with a slate roof and has traditional timber vertical sliding sash windows.



Vernham House



Masons

One further individual feature within this central part of the conservation area is the cast iron water pump by Glenfield and Kennedy of Kilmarnock, just outside the northern boundary of Pond House. This pump is a cylindrical column with fluting, sporting a domed top with an acorn motif. A lions head to the front above the name plate provides the mouth of the pump. This is a historical remnant of a time when this pump would have performed an important part in the community life of the villagers in Vernham Dean.



Cast Iron pump by Glenfield and Kennedy Kilmarnock

#### Key Characteristics

- Central focal point of the village, including the former village pond.
- A high number of listed buildings, forming the historic streetscene.
- Historic plot sizes remain unchanged and easily discernible.
- Traditional boundary treatments include hedges and walls, but there has been some inappropriate modern boundary treatment - mainly close boarded fencing.

### *iii Western end of the Village, including Back Lane*

This area incorporates the island of development enclosed by the east-west road and Back Lane and the scattered linear historic development to the north of Back Lane. Both roads retain an intrinsic rural character – Back Lane is the more intimate, being particularly narrow, with buildings either located to the fronts of the plots or with strong boundary treatments retaining an enclosed nature.

This character area is the largest and contains the most listed buildings in the village, with ten in total. Six buildings of local interest are also scattered around the area. Modern development is located outside the southern and northern boundaries of the conservation area.



Edgington House

Edgington House and The Nook, both listed Grade II, form a termination to the initial view into the village when entering from the west. The buildings face the junction of the main east-west road and Back Lane and form a prominent landmark at this western entrance. Both houses have been rendered and altered over the years, but still reveal 19th century origins. The Nook was originally two 'one up and one down' cottages and a barn with stabling on the ground floor and storage on the first floor and was constructed of cob with a thatched barn. Edgington House by contrast is a more significant building with the remnants of a Doric porch and the existence of large sixteen paned vertically timber sliding sash windows.



The Nook

There are a number of listed buildings within Back Lane. These are generally located at the front of plots, such as at All Ways and Meadow Cottage, both of which are traditionally

constructed brick and flint buildings with thatched roofs and small casement windows.



All Ways

Long Thatch (Grade II) is particularly notable and is set back from the lane behind boundary hedging. The building reflects its name, being a long thatched structure which was once a house and barn, but is now a single dwelling. It dates from the 18th century and is of timber-frame construction with a later brick and flint exterior. Similarly, the Old Forge (Grade II) was also once a house and barn, the latter of which incorporated a forge, and is now a single dwelling unit.



Long Thatch

Cheyney Cottage (Grade II), a typical brick and flint thatched cottage dated 1708, is particularly notable due to the fact that only a few feet in front stands the Primitive Methodist Chapel. This Chapel, dating from 1869, is typical of this period, with round-headed windows and a plain, almost austere white rendered façade which is characteristic of many non-conformist chapels of this period. The Chapel is not a listed building, but is of local interest and is important in terms of its contribution to the social history of the village.



Cheyney Cottage behind  
Methodist Chapel

#### Key Characteristics

- Provides transition between countryside and the village.
- Mixture of historic properties constructed from the 17th to 19th centuries, over half of which are listed buildings.
- Historic plots are still visible and have not been subject of modern subdivision.
- Modern properties on the edge of the area generally do not reflect local distinctiveness in terms of their design or traditional location within their plots.
- Back Lane is intimate in nature.
- Panoramic views out of the village to the south and west.
- Smaller cottages with intimate street frontages.
- Little 20th century infill.
- Traditional boundary treatments.

# Materials, Textures, Colours & Detailing

## Introduction

By necessity builders in the past tended to use materials which were available locally, such as timber, cob, flint and thatch. There are examples of buildings dating from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries in Vernham Dean. These include both simple cottages and later larger, more distinctive late 18th and early 19th century houses, and display traditional construction techniques and good architectural detailing. With improved transport and more advanced manufacturing techniques from the 19th century onwards, a wider choice of materials such as Welsh roof slates and stock bricks became available to builders.

Before carrying out any repairs or considering extending or altering historic buildings within the village, whether listed or not, the original method of construction should be studied, understood and followed to preserve the historic fabric and character of these important buildings.

## Walls



Timber Framing, George Inn



Brick and flint, The Old Forge

Older properties are generally constructed of brick and flint, with some areas of timber framing, often in gable ends. Where timber framing is evident, there is a variety of materials used for the infill panels, including wattle and daub, cob, brick and flint. Flint is a material occurring naturally within this chalk landscape and provided a readily available building material, which was widely used in traditional vernacular buildings up to the 20th century. The flints were normally 'knapped' or dressed to provide a flat square shaped outer surface, which created a regular 'plane' to the wall. Bricks were initially used to create the 'corners' of buildings and the more structural elements such as lintels and door and window openings, but were later utilised to create decorative patterns, such as those at Apple Thatch and Denver Cottage.

Later buildings were constructed of brick or cob which has been rendered or painted. Paint colours are generally restricted to subtle shades of cream, grey or off white.

## Roofs

There are several examples of thatched roofs within the conservation area. Evidence indicates that long straw was the prevailing thatching material in the area. Since the middle of the last century, combed wheat reed has assumed greater prominence and is now the main thatching material in the village. The practice when re-thatching, is to spar coat a new layer of thatch onto the roof, hence in the majority of cases, the base layers are a century or more old. This historic base layer is an invaluable archaeological resource and should not be disturbed.

The majority of thatched buildings in the conservation area are listed. A change from one thatching material to another or a change in style of the thatch will inevitably change the character of the building and hence requires listed building consent. The planning authority will resist the loss of indigenous types of thatching material and would need compelling evidence in support of such a change.

As craftsmen, thatchers take great pride in their work and their individual skills are to be respected. While allowing scope for individuality (note the thatched 'pheasant' on the roof of Pond Cottage), it is also important to maintain local distinctiveness if the special character of the area is to be preserved. Historically, thatched roofs in Test Valley have adopted a simple profile with minimum punctuation by dormer windows and other adornment. The appropriate ridge for a long straw roof is termed 'flush and wrap-over' (i.e. sits flush with the main roof slope). Combed wheat reed on the other hand often has a block ridge (one that stands proud) which can be plain or decorated. In the interests of maintaining the simplicity and distinctiveness of the local tradition, the Council encourages the use of flush and wrap-over ridge on both long straw and combed wheat reed roofs.

Clay tiles (mainly handmade) are also commonly used in the village, with natural slate used from the 19th century onwards. There is also some later use of concrete tiles. Unfortunately, this material has a much heavier profile than clay tiles and can often appear prominent; therefore its use is discouraged within the conservation area.



Thatched roof, Apple Thatch



Thatched pheasant, Pond Cottage



Brick and hanging tile, All Ways

## Windows

Windows are a critical element of a building's design and even subtle changes can significantly alter the character. As distinct from their modern counterparts, traditional windows found in older properties are designed with the sub-frame and opening or fixed light flush, as opposed to the cruder design found in storm proofed windows. This produces a more harmonised design. Likewise, the position of the window in the wall, whether flush or set in a reveal and the form of the glazing bars affects the play of light and shade, again significantly affecting the visual appearance.



Casement window, Apple Thatch

There are a number of traditional styles of window within the conservation area, including timber windows with traditionally glazed leaded lights formed of individual 'quarries' of glass (individual diamond or square pieces of glass) with lead 'comes' (the lead which connects the individual pieces of glass together); and cast iron framed and small paned windows, often with decorative window 'furniture', i.e. catches and window stays. One of the styles found in the conservation area is commonly termed the 'Hampshire casement'. This is a well proportioned single glazed timber window with a single horizontal glazing bar equally dividing the panes.

In the late 18th century or 19th century more significant buildings included small paned timber vertically sliding sash windows which demonstrated the wealth of the owners at that time.



Sash window, Chapel

The majority of windows in Vernham Dean are of a reasonable standard of design. Fortunately, the use of non-traditional materials, such as PVCu has so far largely been avoided. While aspirations to improve thermal insulation are understood, wholesale replacement of well-designed traditional windows can rarely be achieved satisfactorily using sealed double glazed units. A more appropriate solution is likely to be through proprietary draught stripping and secondary glazing. Existing windows should be retained, repaired or remade to a design appropriate to the period and design of the property.

## Doors

Doors and associated architectural detailing are important features which often complete the 'character' of the building. The significance of doors to the historic character of a building is often overlooked and doors are replaced with modern replicas of inappropriate detail. The architectural detailing of porches, varying from simple designs for cottages, to the ornate door cases on the more imposing buildings reflect the styles and periods of the buildings and the social context in which they once stood.



Porch detail, Lilac Cottage

## Garden Walls, Fences and Other Means of Enclosure

Garden walls, traditionally detailed fences and other means of enclosure such as hedges (discussed later) are important components and make a significant contribution to the character of the village. Many historic boundaries remain, defining the original plot sizes and are natural or man made.

On the whole, the majority of properties, including modern dwellings, have retained a historic method of defining the front boundary to the garden. In Vernham Dean, this is generally using hedgerow, but some examples of brick, brick and flint or cob walls, exist at the eastern and western ends of the village.

Several examples of traditional 19th century picket style fencing exists to the southern boundary of three dwellings within the 'island' area of development. There is an unfortunate move towards close boarded fencing of various heights in places, however, this is an alien feature, detracting from the historic character of the conservation area.



Picket fence, Meadow Cottage

### Key characteristics

- Most of the older buildings in the village are constructed of materials from local sources.
- Walls were constructed of a variety of materials including brick, flint and wattle and daub, or brick or cob. Clay tile is the major roofing material within the village, with thatch evident on some of the older buildings, followed by slate to the later buildings.

- Garden walls and hedges are important enclosure features which contribute to the character of the conservation area.
- Windows and doors are generally traditionally designed and made of timber or metal.

## The Contribution of Trees, Open Spaces and Biodiversity

A significant part of the character of the village is derived from the contribution made by trees, hedges, open spaces and other natural elements contained within it.

### Trees and Hedgerows

It would be unrealistic to identify all trees which make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. The most significant trees and groups



Tree at Poplars Farmhouse

of trees are shown on the Character Appraisal map. Trees form important backdrops to the village on the valley sides as well as to the rear of the traditional historic plot boundaries. A few larger individual tree specimens are dotted through the conservation area within gardens.

There are a number of hedgerows forming boundaries throughout the historic core of the village, which enclose both residential areas and agricultural land. The hedgerows and associated hedgerow trees are particularly important survivals of the agrarian history of the village and help to retain the verdant nature of the conservation area linking it seamlessly to the surrounding countryside.

### Open Spaces

Open spaces within the conservation area are important as they help to define the built environment and create a sense of place. The important open areas are identified on the Character Appraisal map.

Historic open spaces include the area around the former pond, the land to the rear of Beeches Farm House running east beyond Poplars Farm; land to the north of the Village Hall; and the open countryside backdrop to the north and south of the east-west road at the western end of the village. The secondary focal point within the village to the front of Edgington House and The Nook, creating the road junction, is also important as an 'entrance' into the conservation area from the west.

The area of green at the centre of the village once contained a pond, which was still in use until about 1900, the depression of which is still visible.

## Important Views

The most important views looking into, out of and through the conservation area are shown on the Character Appraisal map. These contribute to the character and setting of the conservation area and care needs to be taken to ensure that these are not lost or compromised by inappropriate development or poorly sited services.

## Other Issues Affecting the Conservation Area

Vernham Dean has experienced relatively little change over the last twenty years and its historic character has largely been retained as a result. The most significant area of modern development has taken place outside the conservation area boundary to the north and east. Care needs to be taken to ensure that this approach to modern development and infilling in the gaps (created by the traditional plots on the historic street frontages, or on back land development) is discouraged otherwise the character of the conservation area will be lost.

There has been very little modern infill development within the conservation area, however where this has taken place, the use or retention of traditional street boundary treatments have on the whole helped to soften any detrimental impact on the historic character of the village.

There are features within the conservation area which have suffered the wear and tear of time. There has also been unfortunate piecemeal loss of hedgerows to residential boundaries and their replacement with modern and inappropriately detailed fences.

As with any other developed area, Vernham Dean is under pressure from modern living. The key pressures on the historic village are:

- Parking – cars can dominate the street scene and detract from the traditional rural character. Opening up gardens to provide off road parking with the loss of traditional boundary treatments (such as walls or hedgerows) can be detrimental to the character of the village.
- Inappropriate modern infill dwellings or extensions to both listed and unlisted buildings of local interest which are not sympathetic to or in keeping with the character of the historic buildings and street scene.
- The use of modern building materials and the pressures of meeting current building regulations, as reflected in the requirement for insulation and the associated use of double glazing and PVCu.
- Satellite Dishes – these alien modern additions to historic buildings can be detrimental to their traditional character and can be particularly dominant in views through the historic streetscene.
- The requirement for new domestic outbuildings such as garages and sheds can have a significant cumulative impact on a historic area. Care needs to be taken to ensure that outbuildings are subservient to and in proportion to the scale of the main dwelling - the insertion of rooms above will generally be discouraged.
- The general survival of the historic plot plan form of the village means that the capacity for new development within the boundaries of the conservation area is limited and significant new development would be detrimental to the historic character and plan form of the village.
- It is anticipated that there will be future pressure for the re-use of any previously developed land within or on the edge of the conservation area. The retention of any existing historic buildings on these areas should be a key aim, thereby allowing a more sympathetic and sensitive integration of any new development into the character of the surrounding historic environment and landscape.

Notwithstanding this, careful consideration should be given to the likely impact of development on the edge or immediately outside of the conservation area boundary as this can have a detrimental impact on views into and out of the conservation area.

## 4 Summary

### Character

Vernham Dean is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty within a dry valley and is surrounded by agricultural land and downland. The historic core of the village has not been altered significantly by modern living. The built form developed along the original east-west road, radiating from the former village pond, and the historic plots can still be traced in the topography of the village today. Buildings date generally from the 17th to the 21st centuries and are all relatively simple buildings with no particular key buildings (such as a Church, Manor House or large 19th century farmhouse), which are normally found within such settlements. Vernham Dean is quiet and residential in character.

### Reason for Designation

A conservation area is defined as ‘...an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. Vernham Dean is a historic settlement within the chalk downland, the general plan form of which has changed only very little over the centuries. The village consists of a mixture of buildings of varying ages and styles, but is probably best known for its many timber framed or cob, thatched or tiled roof cottages. Other distinctive and architectural features include boundary walls and hedges and traditional doors and windows. There is a strong sense of history provided by the traditional intimate historic street scene along the main street and Back Lane, with many properties built close to the plot frontage.

These features all contribute to the character of the village and are worthy of preservation or enhancement. It is important that their significance is understood and taken into account when development is considered. It is often the small insensitive changes that can cumulatively undermine the character of conservation areas.

## Boundary Review

When the Conservation Area was designated in 1983, the boundaries were drawn more loosely than they would be today including buildings of varying quality, as well as areas of open space on the edge of the built environment. A comprehensive review was undertaken by Consultants on behalf of the Council in 2006, to check that there were no anomalies with the boundaries and to avoid duplication with other land use policies and designations. The quality of buildings and features were carefully assessed to identify the contribution (or otherwise) that they made to the character of the Conservation Area.

As a result of the review, the boundaries at Vernham Dean were revised removing newer housing which did not meet the criteria for inclusion and fields on the periphery. Although this land provides the natural setting to the village, it is protected under other countryside restraint or nature/ecological policies within the Local Plan. The conservation area incorporates the historic core of the village including properties on both sides of the main street and Back Lane.

## Conclusions

There has been little significant change within Vernham Dean since the Conservation Area was designated. Vernham Dean is of significant architectural and historic interest and clearly still warrants designation as a Conservation Area.

The character is derived from a combination of factors, which have been identified in this appraisal. These factors include the setting, layout and historic development of the village as well as the quality and variety of the architectural style, materials and detailing. When considering new development in the village, it is crucial to understand, be aware of and work with these features if the special character of the Conservation Area is to be preserved or enhanced.

### Consultation Undertaken as Part of the Review

- Consultation with representatives from Vernham Dean Parish Council early in the process.
- The review and exhibition were advertised in the Parish Newsletters and on the Parish and the Borough Councils' web sites.
- A copy of the draft appraisal was put on the Test Valley Borough Council website.
- Individual letters were sent to all property owners within the Conservation Area informing residents about the Review, inviting them to the exhibition and giving them the opportunity to comment.
- Posters were displayed on local notice boards.
- An exhibition summarising the appraisal and boundary changes was held at Vernham Dean Village Hall on the 23rd September 2008.

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## Appraisal Map





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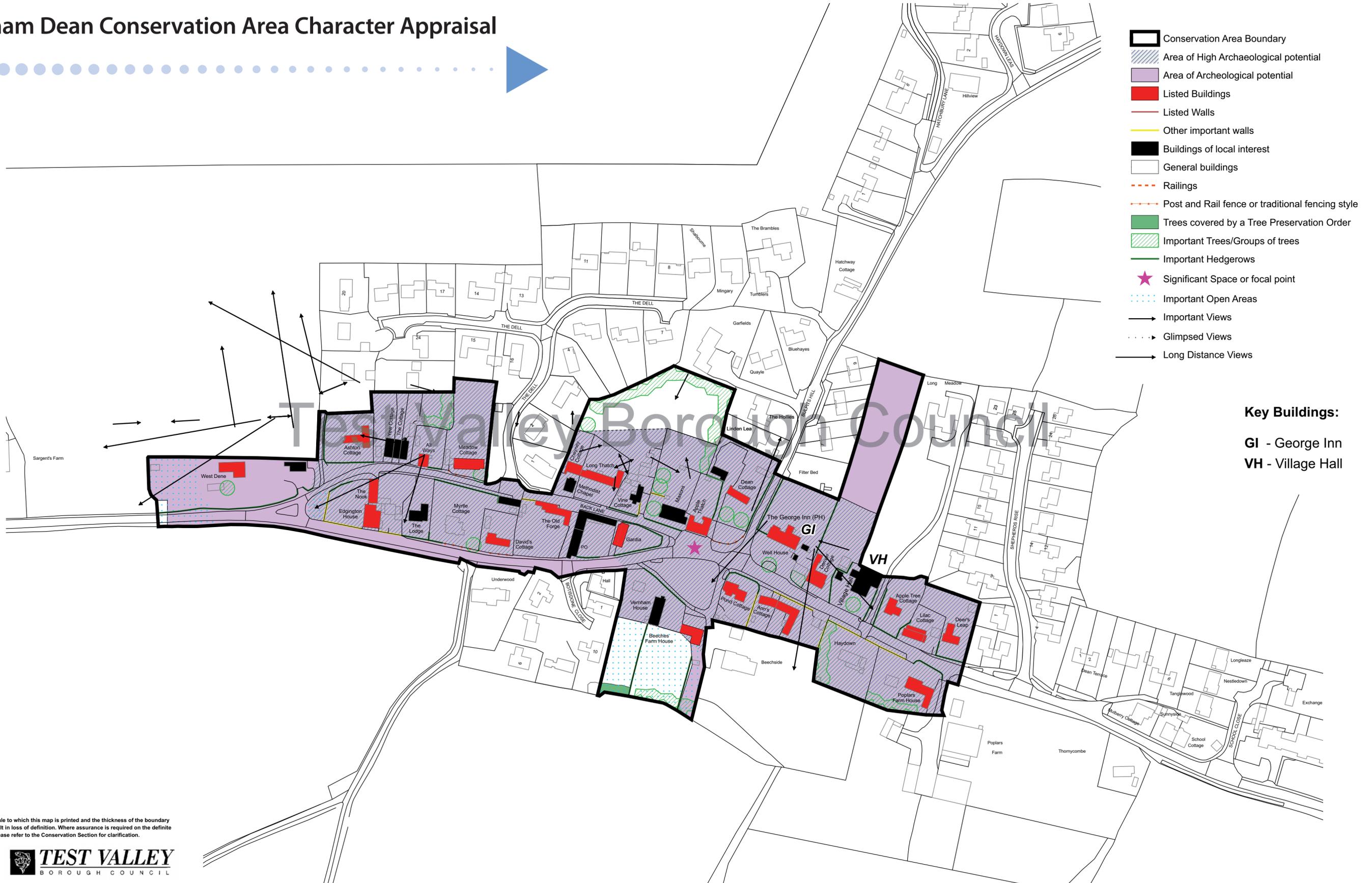
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# Vernham Dean Conservation Area Character Appraisal



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