

Land at West Street, Comberton
Preliminary Heritage Briefing Note
March 2019

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Report

Preliminary Heritage Briefing Note

Site

Land at West Street, Comberton

Client

Davey Estates

Planning Authority

South Cambridgeshire District Council

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Timescales Used in This Report

Prehistoric

Palaeolithic	450,000 -12,000 BC
Mesolithic	12,000 - 4,000 BC
Neolithic	4,000 - 2,200 BC
Bronze Age	2,200 - 700 BC
Iron Age	700 - AD 43

Historic

Roman	43 - 410AD
Saxon/Early Medieval	410 - 1066AD
Medieval	1066 - 1485AD
Post Medieval	1486 - 1901AD
Modern	1901 - Present Day

1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 This preliminary Heritage Briefing Statement considered the proposed development of a small residential scheme (and associated works) at land at West Street, Comberton (Figure 1). The emerging proposals includes the provision of circa 15 dwellings with formation of access road, open space and landscaping.
- 1.2 This preliminary heritage briefing note has been prepared to inform the call for sites process.
- 1.3 The focus of this short report are the heritage constraints and opportunities associated with the site and a brief preliminary assessment of possible impacts on the heritage context.
- 1.4 In accordance with the Paragraph 189 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019) and the requirement for applicants to describe the significance of heritage assets including contribution to setting, this report draws together available information on designated and non-designated heritage assets that are likely to be impacted by the Masterplan indicative layout.
- 1.5 While a full assessment has not been carried out at this stage, this report considers an indicative concept option for development and provides commentary on the potential impacts associated with it. A number of mitigative measures have been considered as part of the evolving design process to minimise potential impact on heritage assets in the vicinity of the subject site and to address concerns by officers raised at the pre-application stage.

Location and description

- 1.6 Comberton is a large village located approximately 6 miles to the west of Cambridge. Development has occurred over many years, as such it is much evolved. The majority of historic buildings are located at West Street and South Street.
- 1.7 The subject site is roughly L-shaped, accessed from West Street. The site comprises an area of vacant open land with some tree cover (there is a pond within the lower portion of the site). The front section of the site is located within the Comberton Conservation Area. The rear is within the Green Belt.
- 1.8 The site sits bounds the western and northern boundaries of no. 40 West Street, a Grade II listed building. There is a dense belt of vegetation along the frontage.
- 1.9 There are a number of listed buildings located in the immediate vicinity of the site including Millyard (Grade II) adjacent to the east of 40 West Street and Westview (Grade II) (opposite the site). There may be other non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity, the setting of which could potentially be affected. These will be identified and assessed in full in a future Heritage Statement.

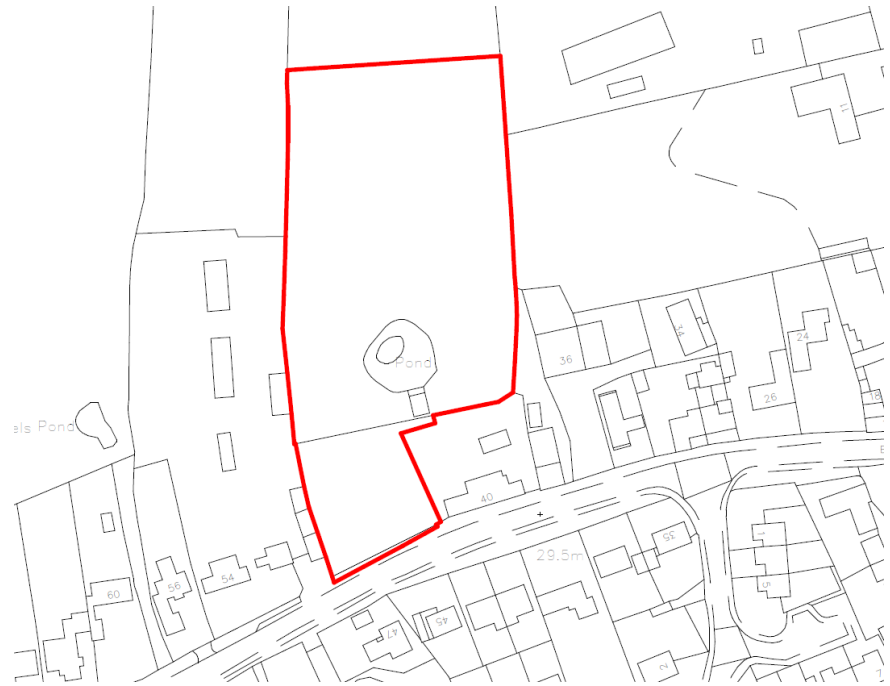


Figure 1 Location of subject site

2.0 Planning Background and Development Plan Framework

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 2.1 The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* sets out broad policies and obligations relevant to the protection of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and their settings.
- 2.2 Section 66(1) states:
- In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*
- 2.3 Section 69 of the Act requires local authorities to define as conservation areas any *areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance* and Section 72 gives local authorities a general duty to pay special attention *to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area* in exercising their planning functions. These duties are taken to apply only within a Conservation Area. The Act does not make specific provision with regard to the setting of a Conservation Area, that is provided by the policy framework outlined below.

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

- 2.4 The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended) protects the fabric of Scheduled Monuments; it does not afford statutory protection to their settings.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 2.5 Government policy in relation to the historic environment is outlined in Section 16 of the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019)*, entitled *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*. This provides guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the conservation and investigation of heritage assets. Overall, the objectives of Section 16 of the NPPF can be summarised as seeking the:
- Delivery of sustainable development;
 - understanding the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits brought by the conservation of the historic environment;
 - conservation of England's heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; and
 - recognition of the contribution that heritage assets make to our knowledge and understanding of the past.
- 2.6 Section 16 of the NPPF recognises that intelligently managed change may sometimes be necessary if heritage assets are to be maintained for the long term.
- 2.7 Paragraph 189 states that planning decisions should be based on the significance of the heritage asset, and that the level of detail supplied by an applicant should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and should be no more than sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal upon the significance of that asset.

- 2.8 Paragraph 197 states that the effect of a proposed development on the significance of non-designated assets should be taken into account and where such an asset(s) are directly or indirectly affected, a balanced judgement is required that has regard the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset(s).
- 2.9 The key test in NPPF paragraphs 193-196 is whether a proposed development will result in substantial harm or less than substantial harm. However, substantial harm is not defined in the NPPF.
- 2.10 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF outlines that where a proposed development results in less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, the harm arising should be weighed against the public benefits accruing from the proposed development.
- 2.11 *Heritage Assets* are defined in Annex 2 as: a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- 2.12 *Archaeological Interest* is defined as: a heritage asset which holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- 2.13 *Designated Heritage Assets* comprise: World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Park and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Conservation Areas.
- 2.14 *Significance* is defined as: the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 2.15 *Setting* is defined as: the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
- 2.16 The NPPF is supported by the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). In relation to the historic environment, paragraph 18a-001 states that:

Protecting and enhancing the historic environment is an important component of the National Planning Policy Framework's drive to achieve sustainable development (as defined in Paragraphs 6-10). The appropriate conservation of heritage assets forms one of the 'Core Planning Principles'.

- 2.17 In considering any planning application for development, the planning authority will be mindful of the framework set by government policy, in this instance the NPPF, by current Development Plan Policy and by other material considerations.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.18 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) is the relevant local plan. Policy NH/14: Heritage Assets 1 states:

Development proposals will be supported when:

- a. They sustain and enhance the special character and distinctiveness of the district's historic environment including its villages and countryside and its building traditions and details;*

- b. They create new high quality environments with a strong sense of place by responding to local heritage character including in innovative ways.
2. Development proposals will be supported when they sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, as appropriate to their significance and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, particularly:
- c. Designated heritage assets, i.e. listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens;
- d. Non-designated heritage assets including those identified in conservation area appraisals, through the development process and through further supplementary planning documents;
- e. The wider historic landscape of South Cambridgeshire including landscape and settlement patterns;
- f. Designed and other landscapes including historic parks and gardens, churchyards, village greens and public parks; g. Historic places; h. Archaeological remains of all periods from the earliest human habitation to modern times.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2.19 The Development Affecting Conservation Areas Supplementary Planning Document and District Design Guide (2010) are also pertinent.

Other Guidance

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice In Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England 2015)

- 2.20 The purpose of this document is to provide information to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing historic environment policy in the NPPF and PPG. It outlines a six-stage process to the assembly and analysis of relevant information relating to heritage assets potentially affected by a proposed development:

- Understand the significance of the affected assets;
- Understand the impact of the proposal on that significance;
- Avoid, minimise and mitigate impact in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;
- Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance;
- Justify any harmful impacts in terms of the sustainable development objective of conserving significance and the need for change; and
- Offset negative impacts on aspects of significance by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 The Setting of Heritage Assets (Second Edition) (Historic England 2017)

- 2.21 Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (*Second Edition*) provides guidance on the management of change within the setting of heritage assets.
- 2.22 The document restates the definition of setting as outlined in Annex 2 of the NPPF. Setting is also described as being a separate term to curtilage, character and context; while it is largely a visual term, setting, and thus the way in which an asset is experienced,

can also be affected by noise, vibration, odour and other factors. The document makes it clear that setting is not a heritage asset, nor is it a heritage designation, though land within a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what the setting contributes to the significance of a heritage asset.

2.23 The Good Practice Advice Note sets out a five-stage process for assessing the implications of proposed developments on setting:

1. Identification of heritage assets which are likely to be affected by proposals;
2. Assessment of whether and what contribution the setting makes to the significance of a heritage asset;
3. Assessing the effects of proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset;
4. Maximising enhancement and reduction of harm on the setting of heritage assets; and
5. Making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes.

2.24 The guidance reiterates the NPPF in stating that where developments affecting the setting of heritage assets results in a level of harm to significance, this harm, whether substantial or less than substantial, should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.

3.0 Historical Development and Location of Heritage Assets; i

Historical development

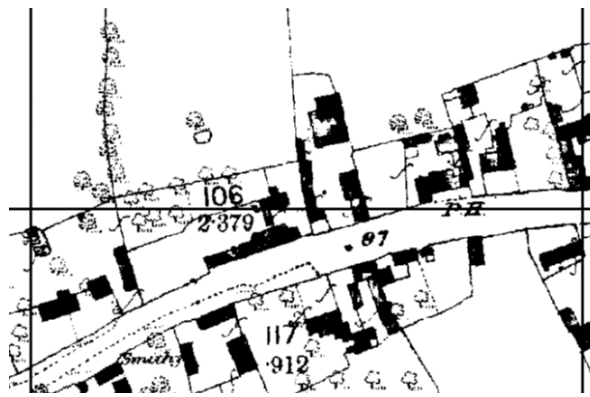
- 3.1 The parish of Comberton is long and narrow, widening towards the south, between the road from Cambridge to St. Neots and the Bourn brook. Its eastern and western boundaries generally follow ancient mereways; the eastern boundary was partially altered when the parish was inclosed in 1839. Until inclosure Comberton was cultivated in four open fields, on a three-course rotation.
- 3.2 Under inclosure the comparatively wide street verges of the village were passed into private hands, and the closes and gardens behind were correspondingly enlarged or additional land was allotted as separate parcels (R.C.H.M.). There was a considerable amount of new building on the verges as well as the construction of small annexes to older houses built out towards the street, and the construction of boundary walls; the verges were encroached in some places to general enclosure.
- 3.3 The village itself is located on a slight gravel rise north of the Tit brook near the western edge of the parish, where the road from Harlton crosses the road from Toft to Barton, dividing the village closes into four blocks. An ancient stone cross formerly stood at the cross-roads where the village pond was located. The village streets were wider before inclosure; strips of the roads were allotted to the owners of adjacent crofts. The widest street was that to the north, which formed a green running into the pasture north of the village. By the 16th century a long narrow inclosure had divided into two, creating a lane named Small Street (later Hines Lane). The former western edge is visible as a dip in some adjoining gardens. The old crofts lay north and south abutting on the Toft-Barton road, except in the north-east quarter where they ran east and west. A back lane at the south east quarter was named Swayne's or Swine Street or Lane, from which other closes reached south to the Tit brook.
- 3.4 The manorial farmsteads of Comberton were established in larger inclosures away from the cross-roads, that of Greens manor to the north, and Burdeleys manor to the south. A road called the church causeway leads past Burdeleys to Church End, where the church and the adjacent Rectory Farm and vicarage stand on the ridge south of the Tit brook, between two ancient ways across the fields. Pre-inclosure layout of fields and crofts does not suggest that there was ever any substantial settlement near the church, although a few houses stood in a close south-west of it by 1800.
- 3.5 The village was first established in the 13th century, when encroachments upon the commons were being made for building. Until the 19th century most houses lay along West Street, between the cross-roads and Toft and a smaller group were located at the middle of Swayne's Lane. In 1841 27 of 102 dwellings were in West Street and 21 in Swayne's Lane. The relatively high incidence of 17th century buildings along the main street reflects the increasing use of the road from Cambridge to Caxton at this time (R.C.H.M 1968).
- 3.6 By the 18th century larger farmhouses were located along the other three streets, mostly close to the cross-roads. Several retain 17th or 18th century structures, including Hawks Farm, The Rosary in Green End Road and Cambridge Lane Farm, built c. 1800. The closes further out to the east and north of the crossroads contained no houses in 1800; farmhouses were built out in the fields following inclosure.
- 3.7 There were 52 houses in 1666, and in 1715 51 messuages enjoyed common rights. The 53 houses recorded in 1831 had doubled by 1841 to 102 dwellings, and stood at 119 in 1921 to 164 in 1931, with several council houses constructed along the Barton road. After the Second World War the county council made Comberton a centre for growth in the surrounding district, complemented by the establishment of the Comberton village college, opened in 1960. Almost 100 houses were built between 1951 and 1961, and the village greatly expanded in the 1960s, with infill along the village streets, and a council

estate of 44 houses south of the east end of Swayne's Lane. Almost 40 houses were built at the western edge of the village near the college, and a large estate of around 300 houses with garages, was erected by private developers on 38 a. in the angle between Barton Road and Long Road.

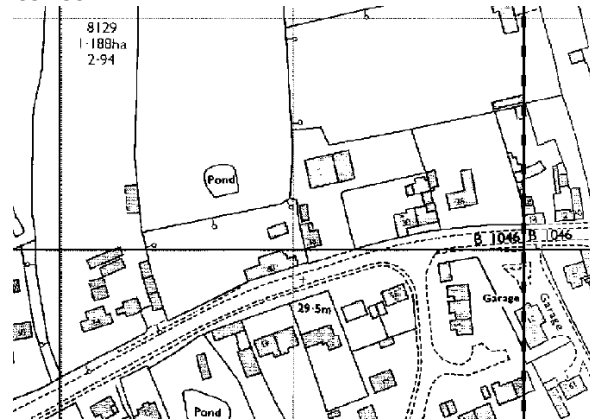
- 3.8 In 1851 the village had four public houses: by the cross-roads the Red Lion; in West Street the Plough, the White Horse, which closed between 1912 and 1922, and the Tailor's Arms, which was still in use by the late 1930s. Later establishments were the Three Horse Shoes in South Street, open by 1861, and the Red Lion (later renamed the Oasis).
- 3.9 A full map regression exercise will be undertaken within the future Heritage Statement. Figure 2 shows the development of the site, with the Tithe Map of 1840 showing the site split into two plots, with separate building east of 40 West Street fronting the subject site. The 1887 Map shows 40 West Street and this building are now connected with built form fronting much of the southern boundary of the subject site.



Tithe Map 1840



1887 OS



Modern

Figure 2 Historic Map Analysis

Listed Buildings

3.10 There are a number of listed buildings located in the immediate vicinity of the subject site. The site is located in the centre of the village and is surrounded by several listed historic buildings of note. These will be assessed in the full Heritage Statement. 40 West Street lies adjacent to the site (NHLE No. 1331105); it was listed in 1985.

3.11 The Grade II listed Old Plough (40 West Street), as it was known in 1973 (VCH), is described in the R.C.H.M. volume published in 1968:

“House, at one time an inn or public house, single-storeyed with attics, framed and plastered save for some 18th-century and later brick replacement or casing, is of 17th-century origin; it consists of an E. and W. range with a cross wing at the W. end”

3.12 The list description states:

Cottage. Mid-Late C17. Timber-framed, roughcast rendered and longstraw thatch roof. Original axial ridge stack with rebuilt upper courses and an end stack of C19. Three bay and lobby entry plan, probably altered in early C19 when a second entry was inserted. One storey and attic. Three dormers. Two doorways, one to lobby entry and both with early C19 flush panel doors. Four early C19 nine-pane hung sashes without shoulders. Adjoining to left hand is a later C19 addition. Roughcast render to timber-frame or clay bat on brick plinth. Single storey, painted, with three similar nine pane sashes with shoulders.

3.13 The cottage is clearly much evolved, as demonstrated by historic mapping (the site was originally within three plots, partially within 225 ,226 and 227 on the Tithe Map). There was once a large building to the rear of 40 West Street and additional built form to the west of the standing building. The significance of the heritage asset lies in remaining historic fabric and architectural value, historical association and importance as one of the historic buildings within this part of the village. Setting is defined by the immediate townscape on West Street and its immediate garden (to the north of the building). The verdant quality of the front boundary and the wider landscape to the west and north makes some contribution to the setting of the heritage asset.

Conservation Area

3.14 Part of the subject site is within the Comberton Conservation Area. The heart of the Conservation Area is focused on the historic core of Comberton, focused on West Street and South Street.

3.15 The special appearance of the Comberton Conservation Area is principally one of a varied group of individual historic buildings of varying age and character. The semi-rural character of the village and landscape setting are evocative of the historic character of the area before the intrusion traffic and a high proportion of modern development.

4.0 Proposed Draft Indicative Layout and Potential Impact on Heritage Assets

Background

- 4.1 This section identifies and assesses the potential impacts of the indicative concept plan on the significance of the heritage assets located in the vicinity of the subject site. A full Heritage Statement will, in due course, follow a stepped approach as set out in the guidance: identifying the heritage assets affected and their settings; assessing whether, how and to what degree settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s); and in this section assessing the effect of the proposed development on the significance of the asset(s).

The Draft Indicative Concept Plan

- 4.2 The draft indicative concept plan is shown in Figure 3 below. The proposal involves the development of the subject site to provide access, a residential scheme and green public open space.

Potential Heritage Impacts

Draft indicative concept plan

- 4.3 It appears the front part of the site at one point formed part of the garden of the listed building and, possibly, it's perceived curtilage. However, the subject site and its relationship with the site has evolved over time. It was once subdivided into three separate sites with buildings fronting part of the frontage of the site. The rear garden of 40 West Street now lies immediately to the north of the heritage asset and is bounded by dense vegetation to the north. There is intervisibility between the front (southern) part of the site and the heritage asset and it can be experienced from there. Visibility from the north is limited.
- 4.4 The interface between the residential development within the southern part of the subject site and 40 West Street (Grade II listed) has been carefully managed to ensure that any new development in this location is visually recessive and not apparent in key views of the heritage asset. In this regard, the proposed access and area of open space to the immediate east residential pocket combined with the proposed and existing natural screening is considered to create legible space between the built form and the heritage asset.
- 4.5 Whilst it is accepted that the historic 'curtilage' and wider landscape setting will be impacted upon as a result of the proposal, it is considered that given the evolution of the site (with built form once extending further west along the front boundary than it does now) and the retention of the immediate garden of 40 West Street, any impact on the setting of West Street would be less than substantial, outweighed by the planning benefits of the proposals (in line with paragraph 196 of the NPPF).



Figure 3 Indictive Site Layout

- 4.6 The Conservation Area cannot currently be readily be experienced from West Street, by virtue of the dense tree boundary at the southern boundary of the site. The small section of the subject site which lies within the front of the site lends verdant quality and will be impacted upon as a result of the proposal.
- 4.7 However, the proposed placement of development is such that majority of domestic built-form will be at the rear of the site, outside of the Conservation Area. Large areas of open space, landscaping and trees, along with the pond, will be retained within the site to ensure the verdant character of the site is retained
- 4.8 The character and appearance of the Conservation Area has been much diminished by 20th and 21st century residential development which has resulted in a backdrop that is largely residential in character. The landscape to the west of the village (and the subject site) and land to the west of South Street in particular contribute to its setting. Whilst the proposal will impact on a small parcel of green space partially within the Conservation Area, green-field land will be retained to the north and part of the tree boundary at the front of the site (not considered a major contributor to the conservation area) will be retained. The site is currently very much enclosed and opening up the front boundary will create visual interest within this part of the Conservation Area.
- 4.9 Areas of open space will be been maintained within the front part (and throughout) the site, combined with adequate and enhancing natural screening. On balance, it is considered that the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance and setting of the conservation area will result in less than substantial harm, outweighed by the clear planning benefits of the proposals (providing 16 dwellings).
- 4.10 In design terms, the elevational treatment and choice of materials will be an important consideration to ensure that the proposed residential buildings are responsive to the important qualities of the conservation area. The proposed materials will seek to provide visual interest and be responsive to the character and appearance of the conservation area.