

ANSFORD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



**SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL
2011**

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Approved 9th November 2011

Introduction

Conservation areas are areas of 'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local authorities to identify appropriate parts of their areas, to designate them as conservation areas and to keep them under review. Historic areas are now extensively recognised for the contribution they make to our cultural inheritance, economic well-being and quality of life. Public support for the conservation and enhancement of areas of architectural and historic interest is well established. By suggesting continuity and stability, such areas provide points of reference in a rapidly changing world: they represent the familiar and cherished local scene. Over 9000 have been designated nationally since they were introduced in 1967 and there are over 80 in South Somerset

The Ansford Conservation Area was first designated in 1971. The District Council is required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to define the special interest and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Conservation area appraisals contribute to the fulfilment of this requirement.

In order that designation is effective in conserving the special interest, planning decisions must be based on a thorough understanding of the Conservation Area's character. Appraisals are therefore essential tools for the planning process and to manage informed intervention. They will provide a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for the relevant development plan policies and development control decisions and will form the framework for effective

management of change. The appraisal should provide the District Council and the local community with a clear idea of what features and details contribute to the character of the conservation area. The more clearly the character or special interest of a conservation area is defined, the easier it is to manage without damaging that interest.

The appraisal document follows the content recommended in advice from English Heritage, 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' published by English Heritage/ Planning Advisory Service/ DCMS 2006.

The planning policy context

The South Somerset Local Development Framework and the saved policies from the South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted 2006) form the current (2011) context for the conservation area policies. Overarching national policy on the protection and management of conservation areas is contained in Planning Policy Statement 5 'Planning for the Historic Environment' (DCLG 2010).



Linear form: Ansford Farm House with prominent trees

Summary of special interest - the area's key characteristics

- Linear in form following the Wincanton Road – historic development associated with a significant historic route.
- A number of significant, listed detached historic buildings,

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dispersed through the area along this route.

- A well enclosed focal point where the road to Castle Cary runs off southwards.
- Distinctive Cary Stone buildings and boundary walls with strongly distinctive colouration.
- Generous planting and some very prominent trees that enhance the built environment.



Generous planting and some prominent trees



A well-enclosed focal point

ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Location Ansford is located in an elevated position immediately north of and almost contiguous with the market town of Castle Cary. Formerly of two distinct elements, Higher and Lower Ansford, the developed area of the village has infilled between and largely joined the two in recent times. The village is located on the WSW facing slopes of Ansford Hill overlooking the valley of the river Brue, extending up to the line of the Wincanton road nearer the crest of Ansford Hill. To the north Ansford Hill falls steeply down to the Brue valley, a major east-west

landscape feature. Extensive views can be had from some parts of the village, northwards and westwards. The conservation area is confined to a narrow area either side of a length of the Wincanton Road.

Setting

The setting of the conservation area on the western side is closely defined by the interface between the historic elements and the modern C20th residential development that abuts the full length of the western boundary. To the northwest the land rises gently to a height of 120m with the skyline forming the limit of the setting in this direction. To the north the land falls away but tree cover restricts the visual relationship of the Brue valley with the northern end of the conservation area.

General character and plan form

The plan form and character are dictated by the focus of the conservation area upon the Ansford Hill road and the origin of Higher Ansford as a (scattered) settlement along this north-south route, the Wincanton Road. The activities of the settlement that grew up along Ansford Hill relate to this and the conservation area has an essentially linear plan form. Several historic routes ran off eastwards now evidenced by country lanes running out into the fields that abut the settlement to the north-east and east; Maggs Lane, possibly originating in the C18th to access the Ansford Manor Park Farm and Coombe Common and Solomans Lane, formerly a route to Bruton. Tuckers Lane is a historic lane leading westward down to Lower Ansford. Churchfield Drive is modern.

Historic development

The village evolved with two parts, Higher and Lower Ansford that reflected its evolution. Lower Ansford was the medieval settled area around the parish church and Higher Ansford linear development along the major route, the Wincanton Road higher up

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on Ansford Hill. Both areas relate to communications routes running south from the river crossing of the River Brue immediately to the north, the name Ansford being formerly Almsford or Almundsford from a ford crossing of the Brue. From this crossing routes ran south gaining the higher ground of Ansford Hill and then west towards Somerton, south to Castle Cary probably through the medieval village and southeast to Wincanton. The route south of the church into Castle Cary is now only a footpath.

Textiles, craft trades and agriculture are likely to have been the principle occupations. Handloom weaving is recorded; Donne's sailcloth business started in the 1790s employing Ansford weavers to be followed later by factory-based textile work both for Donne and Boyd's horsehair weaving business.

The well-known C18th diarist, Rev James Woodforde, lived at The Old Parsonage.

Archaeology

Roman and Saxon finds indicate a possible area of settlement at the higher level of the settlement on Ansford Hill although this is now much built over so deposits are likely to have been disturbed. The medieval village area from the Somerton Road junction down to the church and an area centred on The Old Parsonage are identified as being of high archaeological potential. There are no scheduled monuments in the conservation area

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Character and interrelationship of spaces

The spatial character of the conservation area is linear and defined by its close association with the Wincanton Road. The key spaces are

- At the north end, the tree-enclosed defile where the Wincanton Road starts to descend the hill with the former

Half Moon Inn and Hill House elevated above

- At the junction with Ansford Road, the space defined by built form of the Old Ansford Inn, Ansford farmhouse and Ansford House and
- The narrow wall-enclosed length of road south east end of the conservation area

Apart from these there is not a strong sequence of distinct spaces through the conservation area.

Key views and vistas

Although the conservation area is elevated the focus is largely inward toward the Wincanton Road with the result that views and vistas are not a notable feature. There are vistas each way along the road and the elevated location can be appreciated by the glimpses of the Cary valley westwards down Tuckers Lane and Churchfields Drive. The rising land on the west contains and limits views in this direction.



Enclosure at Ansford Road junction



Geancot, May Cottage and Rosamund Cottage at the top of Ansford hill



Ansford Lodge and the view north

Character analysis

The buildings are somewhat dispersed along the main road frontage, the larger set in generous plots either located tight to the road or set back behind low walls and or railings and hedges. The southern area has a tighter urban form with buildings and high walls enclosing the public realm. To the north of Hillcrest the character is more open with the impact of modern highway design creating wide spaces at Churchfield Drive (where building orientation is at odds with local character) and particularly the wide splays of the Maggs Lane junction. North from here some of the character of the historic route is preserved with strong hedge enclosure punctuated by the positioning of single detached houses and linked groups. The historic houses characteristically have traditional vernacular long fronted plans and share a common two-storey scale. Two terrace groups feature, four attached cottages on the north side of Ansford Hill and at the southern extremity, in Cumnock Terrace, which is unusually taller (two storey with attics and three storey decorative gables each end) and atypically decorative.

Building Uses

The buildings have historically been principally residential and remain so. The exceptions were two inns with one, the Ansford Inn, having been a posting inn associated with the north-south coaching route, and agricultural buildings at Manor farm.

Building types are therefore residential, former public houses/coaching inn and agricultural

Key buildings and structures

There are 27 listed buildings in the conservation area. The key buildings include:-

The Old Parsonage with enclosing walls, grade II*,



The Old Parsonage



Ansford House



Old Ansford Inn

The Old Ansford Inn and Ansford House form a good group with the roadside barn opposite, all Grade II, Half Moon House, Grade II, former inn.

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Hillcrest with good boundary walls and front railings, Grade II, former rectory.
Ansford Lodge Grade II
Cumnock Terrace, 12 houses built by John Boyd in 1877 for some of the workers in his Castle Cary textile business, Grade II

Key unlisted buildings

Victorian - 1, Tuckers Lane - an excellent Cary Stone villa with gables and ornate barge boards, chimneys and front boundary railings, The Red House; red brick with buff dressings, polychromy and faience decorations and Manor Farmhouse, Cary stone and mullioned and hood-moulded windows, prominent on the roadside.
C18 - Venus Cottage, Ansford Road; red brick with curious canted south front, (former Toll House? Stables?)
Agricultural - Barn at Manor Farm with strong blank stone roadside elevation and small barn at the corner of Barley Close.



Manor Farmhouse

Wall materials

The building materials are consistent in the use of -
Cary Stone as both ashlar (Old Ansford Inn) and random rubble.
Doulting stone in detailing such as door cases, ashlar bays (at Ansford Lodge).
Blue Lias stone features as a base course or plinth to several buildings.



1, Tucker's Lane and open view west



Venus Cottage



Cary stone ashlar and rubble with Lias plinth

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Brick is present too but not a feature; orange-red in chimneystacks and some buildings (Combe Lodge red brick, polychromy at The Red House) There are also a few stray examples of painted render.



Roofs

Plain clay and double roman tiles feature with some examples of Welsh slate. Water-tabled gables feature.

Chimneys

Typically brick, mostly warm red, with simple corbelled course cappings. Examples of Douling ashlar, with and without red brick, buff brick, Douling stone copings.

Windows

Classical sashes to the substantial houses, iron framed leaded lights in timber mullions, stone mullions and cottage casements of various patterns. Generally white painted.

Doors and doorways

Good classical door cases in Douling Stone at Old Ansford Inn, Ansford Lodge and Ansford House. Plain panel doors eg at 1, Tuckers Lane.

Decorative iron hinges at Cumnock Terrace are individually distinctive.

Details and local features

Substantial natural Cary Stone random rubble walls are a particular feature of



Boundary walling south of Ansford Road

the area especially on the roadside north and south of the Ansford Road junction and into Tuckers Lane. The southern boundary of Hillcrest is an impressive wall around 3m high running alongside the narrow 'barton'. Ironwork railings feature at the frontage to Hillcrest, Cumnock Terrace and 1, Tuckers Lane and gates at Ansford House and Ansford Lodge and Cumnock Terrace. Wall PO box adjacent to Ansford Lodge.



Decorative ironwork



Gates, railings and decorative hinges at Cumnock Terrace

Green spaces and trees

There is only the diminutive Jubilee Garden as formal public open space in the area. The open area on the south side of Maggs Lane junction provides a distinct open setting to Ansford Lodge and although the highway visibility splays are a prominent intrusion that to the north contains some pleasant boundary trees that contribute to character.

There are several important trees/tree groups -

- South of Manor Farmhouse a fine beech important to the street scene
- Along the southern boundary of Hillcrest a significant group
- On the southern boundary of The Old Parsonage a prominent pine
- On the southern boundary of The Red House



Trees, walls and The Red House

Hedged enclosures typically alternate with walls.

The field known as Barley Close, opposite Cumnock Terrace and The Red House, is of significance to their setting.



Hill House

Colours of the conservation area are anchored in the rich, rufous brown colour of Cary Stone and warm orange-red clay in the tiled roofs that dominate and the infrequent brick buildings. Bright colours are atypical and out of character (blue at Ansford Cottage, some white render eg at Kingston Cottage).

General condition, problems, pressures

The area suffers from heavy through traffic, with many heavy trucks. The traffic lights and associated railings and highway bollards at the Ansford Road junction detract from this key

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space and the setting of the listed buildings located there.



Cumnock Terrace

Overhead wires and their poles are also intrusive. Hillcrest has remained unoccupied and in poor repair for many years. The house together with its listed stable building is a prominent detraction exacerbated by their neglected surroundings and temporary fencing. The Red House is also disused and deteriorating.

Opportunities for beneficial change

Improvement to the traffic management clutter at Ansford Road junction

Repair and occupation of Hillcrest and its coach house

Rationalisation of some intrusive overhead wiring

References

Victoria County History

Somerset Historic Environment

Record and Extensive Urban Survey

Amendments to the Conservation Area boundary

Amendments to the boundary of the area designated originally on 25th August 1971 were designated on 9th November 2011 and this Appraisal approved by Area East Committee on the same date.