

Milborne Port Conservation Area

Appraisal (Draft Sept 2017)

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 widely 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. About 10,000 have been designated nationally since they were introduced in 1967 and there are over 80 in South Somerset.

The Milborne Port Conservation Area was first designated in 1988. 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 will help provide the District Council and the local community hold a clear idea of what features and details contribute to the special 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 *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* Historic England 2016

Summary of special interest

- Survival of Saxon/Medieval street plan, with clearly defined Minster area
- A spectacular Saxo-Norman church of great significance
- Heritage of cloth and gloving industry
- Sequential views along streets and interesting glimpses through narrow gaps in the streetscape to surrounding landscape
- Heavily wooded scarp slopes giving views into and out of the settlement, and creating a sense of landscape enclosure

- Well contained principal streets with a good range of vernacular buildings contrast with steep and narrow lanes running into river valley
- Consistency of building materials and scale creates a distinctive local character

Location and Setting

Milborne Port is situated within and alongside a shallow valley formed by a headwater tributary of the River Yeo, known here as the Gascoigne, within the gentle folds of the East Somerset Hills. It is located some 12km east of Yeovil, and is served by the A30 trunk road, which passes through the village core. It was formerly a royal Saxon borough, with its own pre-Domesday market and mint, and a minster of Saxon origins. The village thrived on market trade throughout the Middle Ages, whilst cloth weaving became the prime industry with an increasing emphasis on sailcloth from the 18th century, and gloving from the mid-19th. Residential development in the early 19th century was motivated by conflicting political aspirations, which led to the building of “Newtown” to the west of the village, whilst in the last 50 years Milborne Port has seen steady growth to the north of the A30, and now has a population approaching 3000 residents.

The village has grown primarily to the north and northwest from its compact Saxon core, though its centre and main commercial area remain concentrated around the High Street (A30). Residential growth initially spread from this core to the side of the River Gascoigne valley, and along East Street in the early 19th century, along with the separate development of Newtown to the west. The past 60 years has seen moderate growth between the roads that converge toward the core from the north, to form two moderately-scaled areas of housing to either side of the central valley. The former cloth and gloving employment areas are now dedicated for residential development, hence the commercial area aside, there are few employment areas within the village.

The immediate landscape setting of the village is the valley centred upon the River Gascoigne, as defined by the broad crown of Vartenham Hill's eastward falling dip-slope to the west of the parish, and the wooded escarpment of East Hill to the east. To the south, a continuation of that escarpment sweeps through Crendle, Hanover and Goat Hills to provide enclosure to the valley, which is characterised by the open parkland and mixed woodlands originally associated with Ven House. To the north, the setting is less defined, but broadly coincides with the elevated ground associated with Combe, Broad and Stout Hills that lay in close proximity to the main London – Exeter rail line, to thus place the village in a hill-encircled vale.

The geological map illustrates the topography of the area. Inferior oolitic limestone rock on which the village is located has historically provided materials for the construction of the buildings in the 17th & 18th centuries, quarried from Highmore's Hill and also from Milborne Down.

GENERAL CHARACTER AND PLAN FORM

The village is rich in architecturally interesting buildings and streets with a tightly-grained urban form of modest buildings largely built in the local vernacular.

The overall plan form is of a nucleated core around the High Street and South Street, based on the Saxon and early medieval layout of regular north-south and east-west alignment of streets. Extensions of the built area into the river valley results in some steep winding streets and whose character contrasts with the village core.

Radial routes lead north, east and west and out to the now linked but originally separate settlements of Kingsbury and Newtown adjoining.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

In the mid 11th century Milborne was a large rural estate with urban and industrial characteristics and its church was a minster whose parochia included places several miles south in Dorset, as well as Charlton Horethorne to the north and Goathill to the south-west. The country house called Ven represents a secondary settlement established south-east of the borough by the 13th century while Kingsbury Regis in the valley to the north formed another separate settlement.

The parish church stands on the highest point of a spur formed where the south-flowing stream from Kingsbury turns eastwards. A roughly rectangular area is defined by High Street, South Street, Brook Street, and Bathwell Lane on the west probably marks the minster enclosure. The same area seems to have formed part of the medieval borough, which also extended north into the present North Street. At the north-east corner of the presumed minster enclosure a triangular market place was formed at the junction of North and South streets with the east end of High Street. Much of that area had been encroached upon during the 18th century, by housing and by the market house. The cross, whose base seems to date from the 13th century, was removed to the site of the former bandstand at the end of Bathwell Lane in 1959.

North of the east-west axis the settlement pattern is less regular but comprised North Street and the road to Charlton Horethorne.

The cloth industry augmented a rural, agricultural economy during the medieval and post-medieval period and the C14th Lay Subsidy records fullers, dyers and tailors amongst the taxpayers. By 1781 there were four weaving sheds producing flax- and sail-cloth. During the industrial period the cloth industry was replaced with tanning and by 1830, the textile industry had been largely superseded by tanning and glove production with as many as seven glove-making businesses recorded in the town in the first half of the 19th century. The first gloving factory was operational by 1810, swiftly followed by further factories in 1816 and 1823, owned by Ensor, Silas Dyke, and Pitman. Dyke's factory was the last to close for production in 1984, but the Tannery remained until 1994.

The Tithe Map of 1840 indicates the extent of development within the village, and relates to the new factories and associated housing. Ven House and the associated Yard House and terraced housing along East Street are clearly shown. Further housing constructed for glove makers, principally women who worked from their homes (VCH 1999) is evidenced on these maps by the higher density development through the village, providing an indication of the increasing importance of the village for its trading links.

From the mid 1800s, large gentry houses, evidence of the economic success of the industry, were constructed by the wealthy glove factory owners (Ensor, Dyke and Pitman) in different parts of the village: Cross House at North/High Street junction; Knapp House at Rosemary Street, and Bazzleways along Station Road. The build of these houses formed the basis for the beginning of extended development within and on the periphery of the town

The survival of relatively few 18th-century houses in the High Street and around the market place suggests that the village settlement was sparse. By 1820s the built-up area had expanded northwards and there was infilling, largely in the form of small cottages. Conflicting political factions in the borough led to the creation of the settlement of small thatched houses in Newtown.

Examples of workers' housing included Ven estate C19 housing in East Street, Russell Place (1867) and Baunton's Orchard, both in Kingsbury..

By 1948, much residential infilling has occurred in the southern sector of the village, particularly at the lower end of South Street, and to the rear of Brook Street. Development continued during the 1950s and 1960s with undistinguished artificial stone houses and bungalows along North Street, off Station Road, along Rosemary Street, and off Coldharbour.

THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The character and interrelationship of spaces

The key to the form of the area is the surviving historic cruciform street pattern with the High St, the present A30 road, running through the core of the village with streets running north and south from the former central market place at their junction. The area south of High St is the original Saxon Minster precinct still defined by South St and Bathwell Lane.

Much building and infilling in the last 50 years has taken place with the result that modern houses of sometimes incongruous design exist in many streets and back plots – bungalows of artificial stone, broad white fascias, low pitched roofs etc. While these are not of historic interest or architectural distinction they are so closely intermixed into the conservation area that it is not appropriate to try to exclude them.

Landmarks

Church of St John; clock tower of the former school, Gainsborough; The Town Hall, Ven House and its formal setting

Key colours

Warm russet brown of local Oolite stone is a distinguishing colour theme throughout with warm red brick and clay tile accents.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

The conservation Area has been designated for its special character but, as with many larger villages, at Milborne Port this is not one that is singular or homogenous. Milborne Port's conservation area has a varied character with the distinctly urban High Street, for instance, contrasting with the rural atmosphere of Brook Street and Tapps Well or the grandeur of Ven. These are parts that have different character variations but contribute to the whole. The definition of these 'sub areas' and the description of the elements making up their character provides a convenient way to a more detailed, comprehensive description.

When using this document it should be noted that there will often be a transitional area between the defined character areas where the character may contain aspects of both adjacent areas.

The area can be subdivided into 8 areas (see map):-

1. The village centre – High, North, South and East Streets
2. Tapps Well and Brook Street
3. Sherborne Road and Gainsborough
4. Ven, and its parkland
5. Gunville and Rosemary Street
6. The western approaches – proposed extension
7. Station Road and Coldharbour
8. Kingsbury

1. The village centre – High, North, South and East Streets

The central historic core of the village focussed on High Street, the historic E-W through route, North and South Streets crossing at the former market place with the probable original Saxon minster precinct still identifiable between Bathwell Lane and South Street. The character is mixed country-town urban through High St and in the central parts of North, South and East Streets with street spaces largely enclosed by buildings or walled, the streets narrow and a distinctly varied building line in High St. Away from this immediate central area southern South St, further out on North St and East Street the character is somewhat more mixed or suburban with less consistent built-up frontages, more dispersed buildings. Bathwell Lane, although well-defined by walls, is more rural and open in character with the large churchyard providing a noteworthy open space. Minor lanes, Church St and Chapel Lane, are of variable enclosure and more 'villagey' character.

Built form High density much street enclosure without setbacks on main streets although some set-backs are found in all streets. Density reduces at edges of the subarea and a number of suburban elements are present in all parts.

Build type Mixed era C17/C18/C19 and modern houses and cottages now in varied uses; Market house now town hall; former coaching inns; Parish and United Reform Churches, gentry houses; uniform estate cottages in East St. Former glove factory in North St (3 storey), workshops. Early C21 housing development next to churchyard.

Key characteristics generally 2 storey domestic but occasional single storey too - eg South St. Occasional larger domestic (Canon Court, Cross House). Local stone rubble, some ashlar Ham Hill stone, some red brick dressings or pale colour render, boundary walls in stone. Slate and tile roofs, stone eaves courses, generally gabled, white windows, brick chimney stacks. Some gabled dormers but roof dormers atypical

Views and vistas

- West from The Clump and Bathwell Lane over the river valley at Tapps Well
- Southwards through Five Court towards Church tower

Significant trees and green spaces

- Churchyard of St John The Evangelist with some fine trees
- Tall pines adjacent to Cross House

- Prominent oak opposite Town Hall
- Largely paved open area at Fives Court on south side of High St.

Details and features Raised pavements on High St with railings; Railings and decorative paving at Cross House; adjacent to the Town Hall, pavings, Somerset lamp standard and K6 telephone box opposite. Railings at Cross House, Glovers Court

Unlisted buildings of note - 27 and 28 High St opposite Town Hall; group along Thimble Lane; Limerick Villas, terrace of six, stone with brick dressings and former glove factory at Glovers Court, 3 storey in local stone with Ham Hill dressings in North St; Orchard Close, Glovers Close.

Listed buildings - Church of St John The Evangelist GI; Canon Court GII; United Reformed Church and schoolroom GII; Nos 61, 71, 72, 164, 168 and 169 South St all GII; 58, London Road; Queens Head Inn GII; Tippling Philosopher Inn (formerly Kings Head) GII; Old Bank and Bank House GII; 103 Gunville GII; Fives Court GII; Nos 4,6, 7, 8, 9, 204, 205, 206 High Street all GII; Town Hall GII; Cross House, The Lodge, Nos 159 and 160 North St GII.

2. Tapps Well and Brook Street

The river south of Sansomes Hill flows south through the undeveloped river valley at Tapps Well before turning east where it flows behind the gardens of the Brook Street houses. Character is rural-feeling, wrapping the built area of the old Saxon minster precinct, open on the west and more enclosed on its south side; the rural edge of the village. In Brook Street feeling of enclosure with containment by boundary walls or buildings.

Built form Individual buildings around Tapps Well or dispersed and grouped in Brook Street. Some buildings set back with walled front gardens some hard on edge of lane.

Build type On Bathwell Lane, mid C20 (new) vicarage, late C20 individual houses; in Brook Street mix of C18/C19/C20 houses and cottages, ranges of farm buildings at Canon Court Farm.

Key characteristics 2 storey domestic scale. Local stone some brick dressings, clay tile (crested ridge to farm building), and slate roofs, brick chimneys, white windows. No dormers typically.

Views and vistas Open prospect west across the river in its small steep valley, the meadows further south and south from Brook Street across field to wooded copse behind.

Significant trees and green spaces

- Significant green space with landmark large trees known as The Clump at the junction of Bathwell Lane.
- The open river valley at Tapps Well is a key green area that forms the setting of the historic Saxon core of the settlement, separating it from the later development on the west and important to the setting of Sansomes Hill, the churchyard etc.
- Small field adj to Brook Street and woodland at Canon Court Farm.
- In Brook Street many trees and lush gardens significant to its character.

Details and features

Unlisted buildings of note the 1937 Vicarage, Bathwell Lane; range of farm buildings at Canon Court Farm; C19 Brook House

Listed buildings –89, Brook Street GII; Base of medieval cross, Bathwell Lane GII;

3. Sherborne Road and Gainsborough

Area centred on the approach to the High Street from the junction with Goathill Road the river crossing, Sansome's Hill and the southern length of Gainsborough. In character it is sylvan with trees and gardens behind walled boundaries and buildings spread out; semi-rural but dominated by heavy traffic on the Sherborne Road. The descent to the river is a short enclosed section with buildings and walls pressing close to the road in contrast to the more open Sansome's Hill area at the Gainsborough junction.

Built form Largely lower density and suburban with many buildings set back in gardens.

Build type C19 former Vicarage; C18/19 cottages, C20 houses, C19 former school at Gainsborough junction

Key characteristics Mostly 1 and 2 storey domestic scale. In contrast, former school and Old Vicarage are large and feature dominant big gables. Local rubble stone, stone dressings, coloured roughcast, some pale render. Plain tile roofs; stone tiles at Sherborne House.

Views and vistas Westwards from Gainsborough over open fields.

Significant trees and green spaces

- Many trees in gardens and around Goathill Road junction and along Sherborne Road
- Broad road verge with embryonic hedgerow avenue planting opposite.

Details and features Base of medieval cross at The Clump, moved from High St.; Former pump house on corner of Gainsborough; Prominent clock tower and railings, piers, wall and gates to former school

Unlisted buildings of note – Wayside and Gauntlet Cottage, Sherborne Road

Listed buildings – Former Primary School, Gainsborough GII; Pump House GII; Old Vicarage GII; Sherborne House GII

4. Ven, and its parkland

An extensive area on the east side of the village, centred on Ven House of 1725, a grand symmetrical block, brick with stone giant order and cornice beneath balustraded attic. Attendant triumphal-arch pavilions frame the approach from the north and screen the service ranges. Around the house are formal gardens and plantations much enhanced and extended in recent years.

The wider area is the former parkland now designated a Grade 2 Historic Park and Garden. The parkland area is bounded by wood-covered hills, and is primarily open pasture but relic historic plantings survive. Hedgerows do not feature and the contrast between the park's open sweep of grassland, and the heavily wooded escarpment frame, is striking and of considerable significance too for the setting of the house and village.

The wider parkland has lost a number of its designed features, most notably the double avenue of specimen elm running out from the north front of the house towards East Hill. Whilst the parkland is not in pristine condition there is sufficient evidence of the former structure and open grassland to reveal the historic parkland character.

The area also includes the former garden plantations and built-within walled gardens around Little Ven that form the eastern edge of the village's built area.

the land in immediate proximity to Venn Farm, where agricultural buildings and storage areas are an incongruous built element within the wider parkland setting.

Built form Dispersed individual buildings in extensive gardens and parkland

Build type Substantial country house and associated buildings, gentry house with former coach house, C20 houses, largely modern farm buildings.

Key characteristics Ven is 3 storeys and 7 bays; varied 2 storey domestic. Mixed scales – grand, substantial domestic, C20 domestic. Brick and stone at Ven, grey render at Little Ven, Local stone, slate and tile roofs, hipped and gabled, white windows, brick chimney stacks.

Views and vistas In the formal setting to Ven - vistas from London Road to north front, south eastwards from south front and north-east up remnants of former approach avenue; views to wooded escarpment of East Hill.

Significant trees and green spaces

- Wooded escarpment and parkland trees
- Tree around Ven itself especially significant cedars
- Trees around The Coach House significant to east end of High Street and mark transition from the urban area to open parkland along London Road.

Details and features Stone entrance gateway to Ven with boundary walls along London Road front; terraces and walls top formal gardens; boundary walls of former walled kitchen gardens, South Street;

Unlisted buildings of note -The Coach House, London Road; walls to former walled gardens S-W of Little Venn.

Listed buildings – Ven House, pavilions, stabling and orangery all GI; Little Ven GII;

5. Gunville and Rosemary Street

Between High street and the river valley, Lower Gunville (and Higher) cross the sloping valley side and feature rows and groups of buildings on different levels, with some prominent retaining walls; a narrow tight-knit street dropping down to Rosemary Street and its river bridge. Here the character is (on the south side within the CA) a rural one of low scale cottages, trees and walled gardens leading to an attractive triangular green at the junction with Paddock Walk. Recently constructed development at Gunville Gardens (outside the CA) impacts on this intimate character.

Built form Mixed density some higher, linked or terraced, some lower detached houses and cottages

Build type C18/19 houses and cottages

Key characteristics Local rubble stone, some red brick dressings, grey render, retaining walls in stone, slate and tile roofs, generally gabled, white windows, brick chimney stacks. Dormers atypical

Views and vistas West along Rosemary Street to the green and The Knapp; westwards from Higher Gunville.

Significant trees and green spaces

- Triangular green Rosemary Street
- Dominant tree east of 1 & 2 Pope's Lane In plot of 8 Limerick Close

Details and features Stone parapet river bridge, high rubble walls and gates to The Knapp, high retaining walls eg at bottom of Pope's Lane.

Unlisted buildings of note Curved frontage Millbeck Cottage, cottage pair at 112 & 114 Rosemary Street, The Knapp, a larger later C19 house now in two parts.

Listed buildings - none

6. The western approaches – proposed extension

The distinctive approach to the village along Sherborne Road from the west, characterised by the woodland belt on the south side and the majestic tree line on the north side that together form an almost formal avenue. The area also includes the listed C20 country house, Bowling Green and the portion of designated Sherborne Castle Historic Park that falls within the Somerset county boundary with its Crackmore entrance lodges.

Built form Dispersed individual buildings

Build type Early C20 country house and contemporary outbuildings; estate lodges

Key characteristics Bowling Green 2 storey with attics, tall single story domestic at Crackmore. Local stone rubble, ashlar stone, slate and plain tile roofs, stone chimney stacks, stone mullion and white windows.

Views and vistas From Sherborne Road, vista through gateway to Bowling Green north front; along approach road to Crackmore Lodges; both east and westwards along the Sherborne Road 'avenue'. Longer views from Bowling Green to surrounding landscape, Goathill and Hanover Hill to the south and the distant East Hill escarpment eastwards.

Significant trees and green spaces The Sherborne Road 'avenue'; wooded area of Sherborne Castle park

Details and features Walled boundary to Bowling Green with gateway on Sherborne Road, stone gate piers and gates at Crackmore

Unlisted buildings of note - none

Listed buildings - Bowling Green House GII, gates and gate piers GII, cottage and stable block both GII, Crackmore Lodges, gates and gatepiers GII. Sherborne Castle Park G1

7. Station Road and Coldharbour – proposed extension area

Station Road, the principal northward route, runs along the eastern edge of the river valley with the open paddocks of the scarp on one side giving views westwards. This open area, large trees on both sides of the road, open fields and a prospect of wooded eastern ridge at Wheathill give a semi-rural character. Coldharbour is a contrasting terraced cluster, the street enclosed, dropping steeply towards the river

Built form Low density, well-spaced, in gardens, mostly set back from road in Station Road. Terraced group along Coldharbour without set backs.

Build type C18/19 gentry houses, attached cottages, some larger including modern. Former Methodist manse and church converted to residential.

Key characteristics 2 storey, varied but domestic scale. In contrast former church at Coldharbour is big in scale and set back. Local stone, occasional pale render, brick dressings, clay tile and slate roofs, brick chimneys, white windows including bays. Dormers not typical.

Views and vistas West across river valley; eastwards to wooded scarp of East Hill

Significant trees and green spaces

- Paddocks on east of river valley with large trees;
- more major trees at Bazzleways and beside the green gap to the south.
- Significant skyline trees on S side of Coldharbour

Details and features Boundary walls on south side of Coldharbour; walls and entry to Bazzleways; railings at Moonfleet

Unlisted buildings of note: Bazzleways, Moonfleet; attractive frontage group on Coldharbour, (Hill View to Co-op); 1-3 Station Road, stone and brick terrace with bays.

Listed buildings – Old Angel Inn GII; group of former Methodist Church, schoolrooms and Manse GII; Top Cottage GII

8. Kingsbury – proposed extension area

Originally a separate hamlet in the river valley north of the village, Kingsbury largely retains this character of rustic charm although recent infill building has taken place. The river forms its core - a tranquil green corridor with old bridges and former farms.

Built form Low density, scattered form in gardens with many set back behind walls containing the lanes. Spacious and open character along riverside, contained in steep lane from Station Road.

Build type Farmhouses and farm buildings, converted, C18/ C19 houses and cottages with some modern infills.

Key characteristics 1 and 2 storey, varied but domestic scale. Local stone, some pale render and artificial stone, clay tile, thatch, stone tile and slate roofs, brick chimneys, white windows. Dormers not typical.

Views and vistas View northwards across river with old bridges and green river banks

Significant trees and green spaces River corridor with garden areas and significant localised tree and scrub cover.

Details and features Ford and slab stone footbridge; single arch road bridge of 1856 in exquisite riverside setting.

Unlisted buildings of note The Old Barns, Court Lane;

Listed buildings – Greystones GII; Manor Farm House GII; Road bridge GII; Footbridge and ford GII

9. Newtown

A planned settlement separate from the village dating from 1818-20 originally built to increase the Whig parliamentary vote by installing Whig voters in the planned 80 houses and unseat the Tory incumbent. Original houses have been augmented by infill or replacement and the area is a distinctive tight-knit enclave accessed by a narrow loop lane and largely isolated from the built form of the village.

Built form Cottages in gardens set back behind hedges. Enclosed character.

Build type C18, C19, C20 residential cottages and houses, some linked or terraced, some detached.

Key characteristics 2 storey houses, many of a small domestic scale. Original pattern was mixed; a thatched irregular vernacular style tending towards the *cottage orné* style, followed in some later cases but not consistently. Gables, dormers, flat and ridged, hips, half hips, pent and irregular or curved roof forms, porches all feature. Painted render, local stone, Ham Hill stone, artificial stone with thatch, tile and slate roofs, white windows, brick chimney stacks. A considerable mixture.

Views and vistas Some views from the rear gardens northwards and westwards over the adjacent fields

Significant trees and green spaces Some fair-sized garden trees.

Details and features Hedged enclosure

Listed buildings Thatched Cottage, 19- 62, 74-76 Newtown all GII

Unlisted buildings of note Gainsborough Arms, Gainsborough

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