

# Great Billing Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan



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## 1 Summary

### 1.1 Introduction

A conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 Section 69).

The Civic Amenities Act 1967 introduced the concept and there are now 21 conservation areas in Northampton. Great Billing Conservation Area was first designated in April 1976 to include the historic core of the village. The Conservation Area was last reviewed in 1989, when it was extended to include St Andrew’s Church and part of Church Walk; it covers approximately 10 hectares, making it one of the smallest of Northampton’s conservation areas.

### 1.2 Summary of special interest

The special character of Great Billing Conservation Area can be summarised as:

- The location on the south facing slope of the Nene valley, which allows open views to the south and west;
- Its origins as an estate village to Great Billing Hall;
- The village is self-contained, compact and has retained its historic plan form of a main street with side lanes, resulting in an individual identity separate from the surrounding built-up area. The informal layout, generally high density and the inter-relationship of buildings and open spaces combine to create a distinct sense of place;
- A concentration of good quality stone buildings - predominantly two-storey with some three-storey – that date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards and reflect the origins and evolution of the village; a number are listed as being of national architectural or historic importance;
- A variety of architectural styles and types of building, with fine individual Georgian houses, vernacular cottages, farmhouses & converted farm buildings and estate workers’ houses unified by the predominant use of sandy-coloured limestone and darker ironstone with Welsh slate for roofs to create visual harmony; there is a limited use of brick for building;
- Stone boundary walls are a significant feature and create a sense of enclosure which, when combined with narrow lanes and buildings at the back of the highway, result in a distinctive appearance;
- Mature trees, well maintained private gardens and areas of open space (notably The Leys) create an attractive green environment;
- A limited amount of through traffic creates a tranquil, semi-rural atmosphere within the built-up area of Northampton.

### 1.3 Summary of issues

Although the area has retained its historic character, there are pressures which could erode the special character and appearance. These include:

- Development pressures to provide more housing and larger houses;
- Incremental changes to historic buildings, the public realm or the use of inappropriate materials;
- Loss of trees.

## 1.4 Opportunities for enhancement

Change is inevitable and it is not the purpose of a conservation area to prevent new development but to manage change in order to maintain, reinforce and enhance the special character and quality of the area that justifies its special status.

In addition to statutory legislative and local planning controls, the following opportunities for the enhancement have been identified:

- Encourage the preservation and reinstatement of historic detailing on buildings within the Conservation Area.
- Promote the sympathetic management of open space and the public realm.
- Establish a list of locally significant buildings.
- Promote retention of trees which contribute to the appearance of the area.

## **2 Introduction and Planning Policy Context**

### 2.1 The Importance of Conservation Areas

***“The contribution that historic areas make to our quality of life is widely recognised. They are a link to the past that can give us a sense of continuity and stability and they have the reassurance of the familiar which can provide a point of reference in a rapidly changing world. The way building traditions and settlement patterns are superimposed and survive over time will be unique to each area. This local distinctiveness can provide a catalyst for regeneration and inspire well designed new development which brings economic and social benefits. Change is inevitable.”***

*Historic England: “Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management”, February 2016*

Conservation area status seeks to protect and enhance the special character of the designated area. The controls can be summarised as:

- Most demolition requires permission and will be resisted if the building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
- Some minor works to houses require planning permission. Examples are side extensions, dormer windows, cladding of buildings and the installation of satellite dishes on front elevation of houses..
- A higher standard of design applies for new buildings and for extensions and alterations to existing buildings.
- The Borough Council needs to be notified of most work to trees six weeks before the work is due to take place.

Local authorities are also required to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their conservation areas and to periodically review them to ensure that the special status is justified.

## 2.2 The purpose of a Conservation Area Appraisal

This appraisal, photographs and maps are intended to identify those elements which contribute to the special character and appearance of Great Billing Conservation Area and which justify its special status. It will provide the basis for making informed, sustainable decisions about the positive management, protection and enhancement that will preserve and enhance the special character of the Conservation Area.

The appraisal will be a material consideration when Northampton Borough Council, as local planning authority, considers planning applications within the Conservation Area or which impact upon the appearance or setting of the area. The content is based on guidance contained in Historic England Advice Note No.1, "Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management", issued in February 2016.

## 2.3 Planning policy context

The appraisal fits within wider national legislation, regional and local planning policies and the National Planning Policy Framework.

### National policy

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to, "designate as conservation areas any area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

The Act also requires local planning authorities to review their conservation areas from time to time to determine whether new areas should be designated, boundaries revised or whether designation should be cancelled if an area no longer possesses special interest.

Section 72 of the Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas when considering planning applications.

National policy on the historic environment is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Conservation areas are defined as designated heritage assets and of particular relevance are the following paragraphs:

Paragraph 127: local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies conservation area status because of its special architectural or historic interest and that the concept is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.

Paragraph 128: applicants for planning permission should describe the significance of any heritage asset affected.

Paragraph 131: in determining planning applications, the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets should be taken into account.

Paragraph 132: when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation; significance can be harmed through development within its setting.

Paragraph 133: substantial harm to a designated heritage asset should be refused consent unless necessary to achieve substantial public benefit.

Paragraph 134: less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Paragraph 135: the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account.

Paragraph 137: local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas to enhance or better reveal their significance.

Paragraph 138: loss of a building that makes a positive contribution to the significance of a conservation area should be treated either as substantial harm or less than substantial harm, taking into account the significance of the building and its contribution to the conservation area.

Paragraph 141: local planning authorities should make information about the significance of the historic environment publicly accessible.

### Regional policy

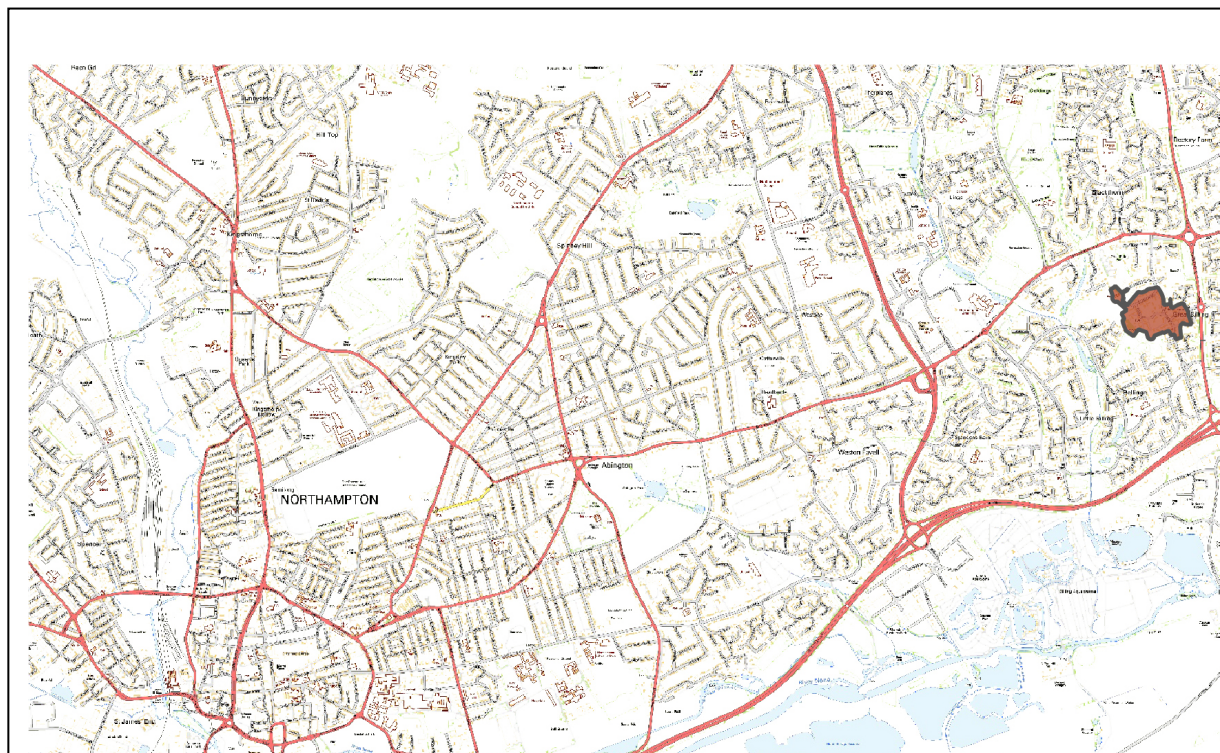
The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2014 sets out the long-term vision and objectives for the area until 2029, including strategic policies for steering and shaping development. Policy BN5 states that: Designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings and landscapes will be conserved and enhanced in recognition of their individual and cumulative significance and contribution to West Northamptonshire's local distinctiveness and sense of place.

### Northampton Local Plan

Saved Policy E26 – new development to preserve or enhance character and appearance of conservation areas.



### 3 Location and plan form



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#### 3.1 Location and topography

Historically, Great Billing was a stand-alone estate village located approximately four miles to the east of Northampton and south of the road to Wellingborough. The village developed on the fertile, south-facing slope of the Nene valley, above low lying land liable to flood and where the spring line provided a reliable water supply, and along a route that ran north-south to a crossing point of the river. The location also provided extensive views southwards across the Nene valley. The land slopes gradually from a point approximately 84 metres above sea level at the north end of the village to 75 metres at the southern end, before falling away more sharply towards the Nene.

Geologically, the village is located upon the Northampton Sand formation, which provided a pale sandy limestone known as Pendle and beds of darker iron-rich sandstone and ironstone that was suitable for building. Limestone is the main building stone that was historically used in villages in the area and contributes to the distinctive unity of appearance in Great Billing. The stone was dug from pits on the north side of the Nene valley, to the south of the Wellingborough/Kettering roads and most notably to the west of Weston Favell.

#### 3.2 General character and plan form

The Conservation Area has a compact, nucleated and relatively high density pattern of development, to the south and east of the former Great Billing Hall and park. Historically, buildings fronted the main (High) Street that ran north-south towards the crossing of the Nene, with narrow lanes and footpaths running off it to serve farmhouses, cottages and farm outbuildings. The boundary of the Conservation Area is shown on the following aerial plan.





**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Great Billing Conservation Area aerial plan

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## 4. Historic development

4.1 Recorded as “Bellinge” in the Domesday survey of 1086, Great Billing has early Saxon, 6<sup>th</sup> century origins, with the name deriving from Bydel and inga (or people of Bydel). By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, two separate settlements are recorded – Billinge Magna (now Great Billing) and Parva Byllinge (Little Billing).

4.2 The earliest settlement took advantage of the fertile Nene valley soils, a good water supply on the spring line and the south-facing slope. In the Domesday survey, the manor is recorded as being held for the King by Gilbert the Cook and during its 900 year history, the country estate was often under Royal patronage and gifted to branches of aristocratic families. The village supported an agricultural community and manorial records dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century record it as being held notably by the Barry family (12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century), the Earl of Thomond (17<sup>th</sup> century), Lord Cavendish (18<sup>th</sup> century) and by the Elwes family in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is thought that until the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, the village was located to the west of St Andrew’s Church, but the population was decimated by the Black Death and the old village was abandoned and gradually rebuilt in its present location<sup>1</sup>.

4.3 The original Jacobean manor house was rebuilt in 1776 by Lord Cavendish as a Palladian style country house in a parkland setting, with a plain nine bay frontage and pediment to a design by John Carr. The extensive park to the north and west of the Hall was enclosed by a ha-ha that allowed open views outwards; a section along the western boundary of St Andrew’s Church has been restored by the Parish Council.



*Early twentieth century view of Great Billing Hall (photograph courtesy of Lost Heritage – England’s Lost Country Houses: [www.lostheritage.org.uk](http://www.lostheritage.org.uk))*

4.4 The estate was bought by Robert Cary-Elwes in 1796 and the present-day appearance of the village owes much to the Elwes family, who lived at Great Billing until 1931. In the 1860s, Valentine Cary-Elwes employed the Northampton architect E.F.Law to alter the

<sup>1</sup> Northamptonshire County Federation of Women’s Institutes, Northamptonshire Villages, p41

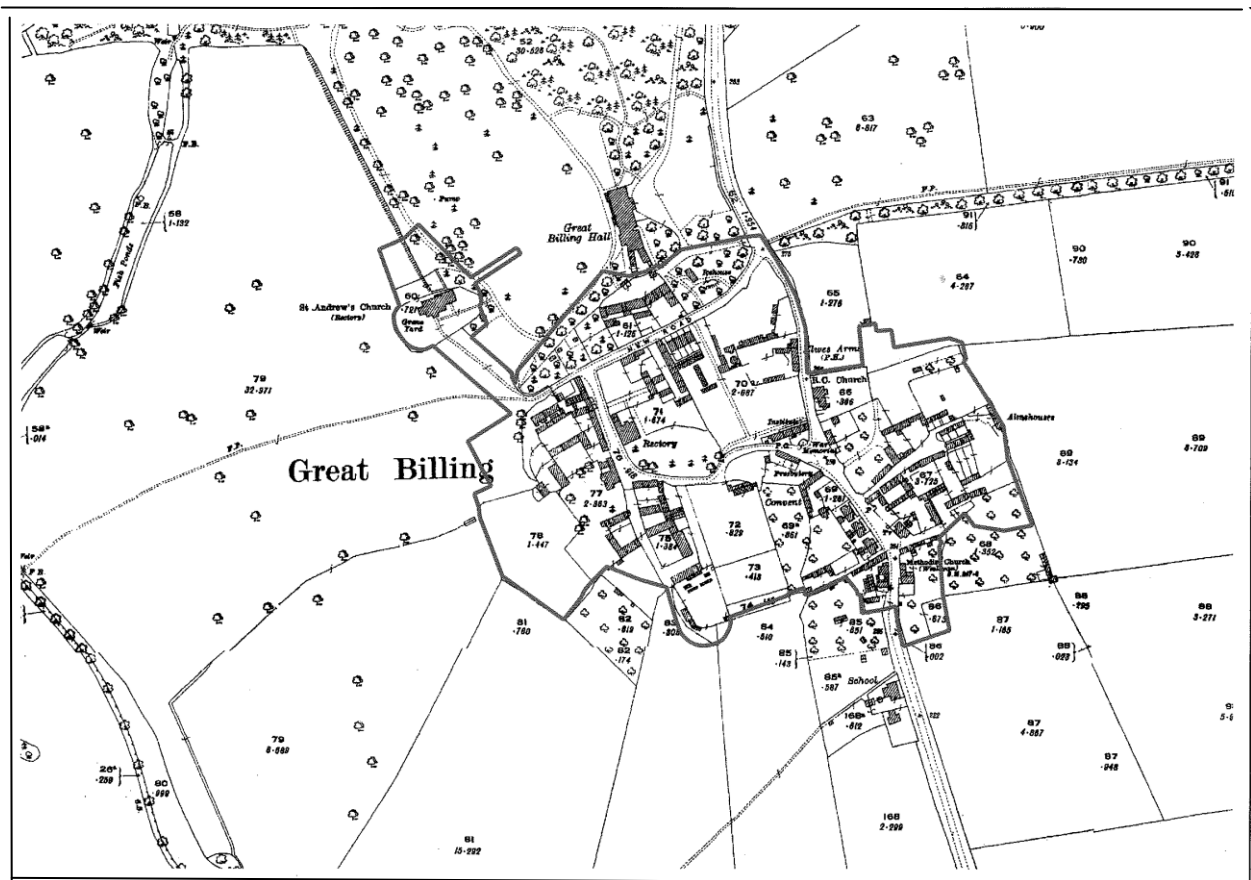
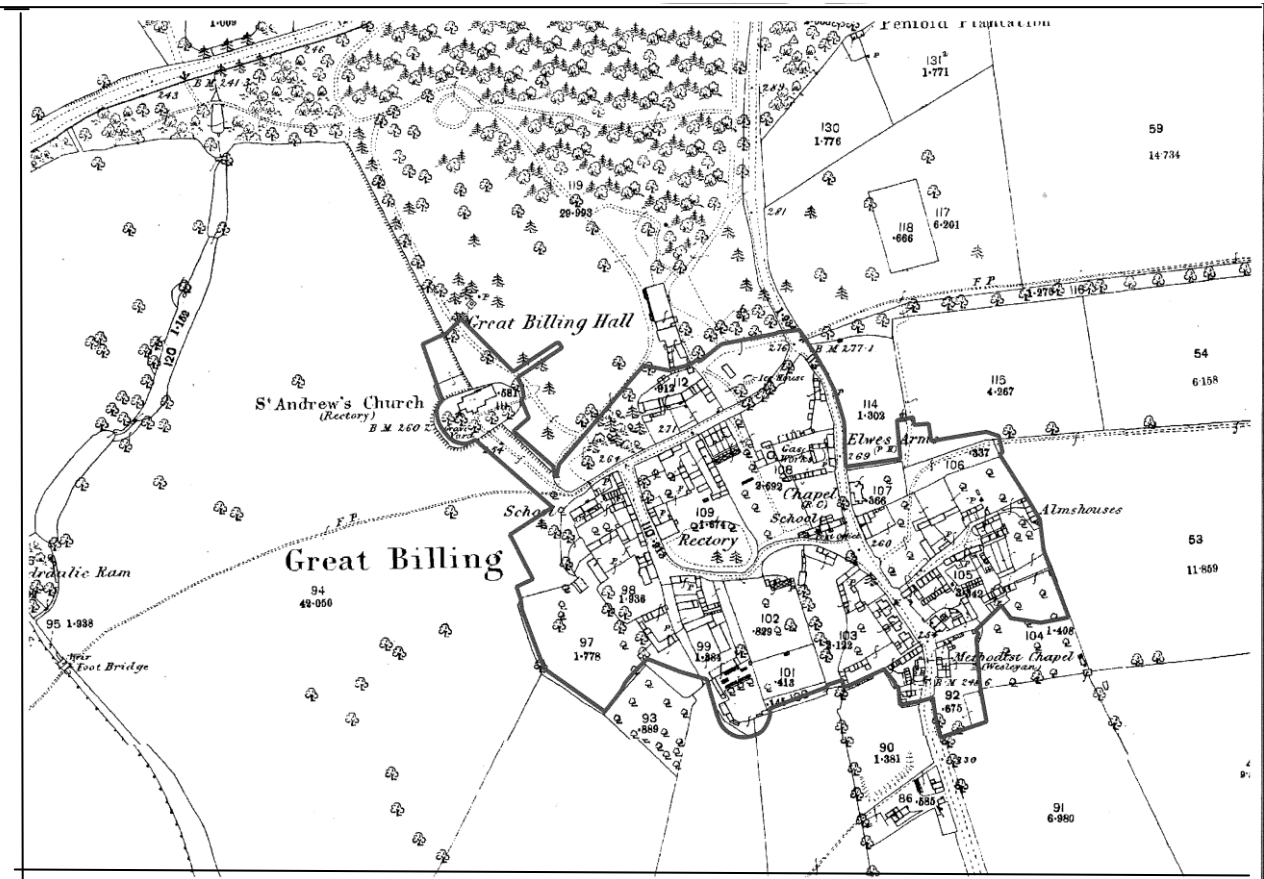
interior of the Hall. Law was engaged extensively by the family and was also responsible for the design of estate workers' houses on High Street and Church Walk in 1866 and the restoration of St Andrew's church in 1867. The village originally extended as far as the church, but the road was diverted and cottages demolished to increase the seclusion of the Hall. The village school on High Street was converted and extended as the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour in 1878/79 following the conversion of Valentine Cary-Elwes to Catholicism and a replacement school was built to the south of the village; the Italianate-style tower was added in the 1920s.

4.5 In 1909, his son Gervase Elwes, who trained as a lawyer but was also a prominent diplomat and famous tenor, became Squire of Billing. His death in 1921 appears to have marked the beginning of the decline of the estate; the plaque on the wall on High Street (below) is testimony to the affection and respect felt within the village.



4.6 The decline of the Great Billing estate was mirrored throughout the country in the changing economic circumstances following the First World War. The Hall was sold in 1931 and part of the parkland off Wellingborough Road was purchased by the Northampton leather manufacturers, Pearce's, who built a striking Moderne-style factory in 1939, now listed grade II. The Hall itself was demolished in 1956 and the extensive park to the north of the village sold-off; Lady Winefride's Walk is built over the site of the Hall and stonework has previously been exposed during building work. Pearce subsequently donated part of the surviving open land to the west of the church as open space to the Parish, now known as Billing Leys. The land is particularly important since the urban expansion of Northampton in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century has largely subsumed the village within the built-up area. Even so, the distinct identity of the village has remained and new infill development has been broadly sympathetic to the historic character.

Map 2: Extract from the Ordnance Survey sheets of 1883 & 1925 © Crown copyright





## 5. Assessment of Special Interest

### 5.1 Character areas

Although small in area, the Conservation Area contains several distinct parts of varying character. The following sections identify the key features that contribute to the character of the village.

#### 5.1.2 High Street

The historic main route through the village runs north-south following the valley slope, to a crossing of the River Nene a mile to the south, where the village mill was located. The northern boundary of the Conservation Area is the former entrance drive and piers to Great Billing Hall; modern housing to the north provides a distinct contrast and enables the boundary to be clearly defined.



*The gate piers and former drive to Great Billing Hall mark the northern boundary of the Conservation Area*

On the east side of High Street, the long length of stone wall forms the eastern Conservation Area boundary and is included as an individual feature on account of its importance to the appearance of the street scene; it also creates a strong sense of enclosure. Bends in the road create added interest as views alternately open and close, and mature trees within private gardens contribute to an attractive entrance into the village. Buildings along High Street are of varying age and style and reflect the organic growth of the village.



*View looking south along High Street into the Conservation Area; the wall along the eastern side of the street forms the boundary and is included on account of its importance to the street scene.*

The grade II listed 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century Elwes Arms and the Church of Our Lady, with its Italianate-style tower, are prominent landmarks at the northern end of High Street. At the junction of Elwes Way, the street opens out, with buildings set back behind a narrow grass verge.



The informal relationship of buildings, varied rooflines and eaves levels along High Street create variety and interest. The listed early 19<sup>th</sup> century Old Convent at the wide junction of High Street and Elwes Way (below) has its gable end to the street and the narrowing of the road provides enclosure. The contribution of mature trees to the attractive street scene is apparent.





The Old Post Office at the corner of Pound Lane is constructed of a darker ironstone with limestone quoins and moulded stone surrounds to the windows; it emphasises the quality of 18<sup>th</sup> century stone building and reflects the economic prosperity seen in villages in large parts of rural middle England in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The plaque to Gervase Elwes and the village pump and horse trough are of interest although, sadly, the red telephone box that previously stood here has been removed.



*The Old Post Office, dating from 1703, is a landmark within the village; the moulded stone windows reflect the high status of the building. The village pump, horse trough and plaque to Gervase Elwes are interesting features in the street scene.*

On the opposite of High Street, the row of former estate houses, set behind attractive front gardens, are a reminder of the paternalistic approach taken by the Elwes family as principal landowners in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the south end, No.14 High Street and the terrace on Chapel Row have their gables facing the street and frame the view out of the Conservation



Area. The group of buildings at the south end of the Conservation Area are of interest in that they are predominantly brick built.



### 5.1.3 Elwes Way

This is a narrow, winding lane that linked High Street to the Church and Hall and is characterised by a number of historically important buildings set in their own grounds at low density. The lane is tightly enclosed by the long length of stone boundary wall around the Old Rectory and mature trees contribute to the tranquility. Bends in the lane create added interest by alternately restricting the view. Its name commemorates the importance of the Elwes family to the village



At the junction with High Street, the road widens at the point where the village War memorial, St Anthony's Cottage and adjoining hall and the largely solid rear of the former Presbytery create a focal point that characterises the individual and distinctive quality of the village. The cross was listed grade II in 2016 as part of Historic England's nationwide survey of memorials to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.



Prominent at the western end is the late 17<sup>th</sup> century Old Rectory, refaced in smooth ashlar as part of a Georgian remodelling, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century Manor House and Manor Lodge. These form a group of key buildings that were in proximity to Great Billing Hall and reflect the social importance of this part of the village.







*The view eastwards from Manor Farm Road, with stone buildings and boundary walls enclosing the narrow lane and mature trees, characterises the distinctive appearance and quality of the village.*

Manor Farm House (above) and the converted farm buildings on Manor Farm Road further reflect the origins of the village and the association with the estate. Beyond Manor Lodge, the lane opens out with an attractive row of cottages and converted agricultural buildings (below), set behind a grass verge.







*Cottages and converted farm buildings on Elwes Way reflect the agricultural origins of the village. Traditional-style lanterns for streetlighting are a feature throughout the Conservation Area.*

#### 5.1.4 St Andrew's Church & Billing Leys

The attractive coursed rubble stone church and the approach from Church Walk were included within the Conservation Area in the 1989 review. The grade A listed church, the earliest part of which dates from the 12th century, stands in an isolated location on high ground overlooking the Nene valley. The spire was struck by lightning in 1759 and was not replaced; much of the nave and aisles were restored at that time and in 1776, as part of the restoration, Lord Cavendish had the parapets from the remodelled Billing Hall placed on top of the tower and nave to create the present appearance. The low stone wall alongside the path leading to the church is part of the ha-ha that enclosed the park.







The setting of the Church and village is greatly enhanced by the area of open land to the west - Billing Leys – that, together with a tract of woodland purchased by the Parish Council in 2010, are remnants of the former park and fields that surrounded the village; it allows important views outwards and into the Conservation Area. The low stone cottages behind attractive front gardens on the path leading to the church (below) complement the scene.



### 5.1.5 Church Walk

This straight, fairly wide road reflects its planned origins and dates from the re-modelling of the village, when the road and cottages close to the hall were removed - it was still recorded as "New Road" on the 1925 Ordnance Survey map. High stone walls, mature trees and a group of former estate cottages contribute to the attractive street scene. Nos 6 and 8 Church Walk were converted from the stable block and coach house to Great Billing Hall, whilst No 4 Church Walk was converted from the Hall dairy; these, and the former ice house, are the last surviving buildings associated with the Hall. A path of granite setts that ran from the Hall, through the garden of the Old Dairy and across Church Walk to Elwes Way is an historically important feature. The recently constructed cul-de-sac (Old Carpenters Close) illustrates how new infill development of an appropriate scale and materials can integrate within a village setting and replaced a woodyard that detracted from the appearance of the Conservation Area.



*The converted former stable block and coach house to Great Billing hall, listed grade II, are of historic significance as surviving buildings associated with the Hall*



*View looking east along Church Walk; the straight and relatively wide road suggests it is a planned road, laid-out when this part of the village was re-modelled to provide greater seclusion to the Hall.*





*The surviving section of a granite sett path that crosses Church Walk and ran from the grounds of the Hall to the kitchen garden off Elwes Way is of historic significance.*

#### 5.1.6 Pound Lane & Cattle Hill

The names of these two narrow, informal lanes off High Street reflect their agricultural origins and contain a mix of good Georgian houses, vernacular cottages, farm buildings, modern houses and converted former almshouses at the end of Pound Lane.

The south side of Pound Lane is characterised by tight enclosure, with a row of 19<sup>th</sup> century brick fronted and earlier stone cottages facing directly onto the lane, opposite an attractive area of private gardens and grass verge.



*The pair of cottages on Pound Lane date from the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century and are among the earliest surviving domestic buildings in the village; they are likely to have been single storey with the dormers a later alteration. No.18 Pound Lane is grade II listed.*



*Former farm buildings backing onto Pound Lane contribute to the character and appearance of the area and reflect the history of the village. The overhead powerlines and poles are one of the few negative features of the Conservation Area.*



The view into Cattle Hill from High Street (below) is framed by good quality stone buildings - the three storey Georgian town house contrasts with the pair of estate houses on High Street and the farmhouses opposite and reflects the variety of buildings in juxtaposition that is a characteristic of the village.



## 5.2 Grain and Massing

The core of the village along High Street and Elwes Way is characterised by a harmony of buildings and materials, with a compact, nucleated plan form. Great Billing is unusual in that the church is isolated from the core of the centre, following the rebuilding of the village to the east of the church. Individual Georgian buildings, mainly of coursed rubble stone with slate or tiled roofs and predominantly three storey in height, former farmhouses and outbuildings and rows of smaller cottages are the main contributors to its built character. Infill development since the Conservation Area was designated in 1976, such as Convent Gardens and Old Carpenters Mews, has increased the overall density but has not significantly harmed the historic character of the village.

## 5.3 Key views and vistas

Historically, the location of the village on the northern slope of the Nene valley allowed extensive views outwards across the valley to the south and east, and inwards towards the village; Wettons Guide of 1849 claimed that there was a spot in the parish from which forty-five churches were visible. Although extensive views of open countryside are now lost through the growth of Northampton, the view southwards from High Street and across Billing Leys from Church Walk allow some appreciation of the original rural setting of the village. Views of the church and the western edge of the village across The Leys are also important.





*The view south towards the Nene valley from High Street and the attractive view into the Conservation Area.*



## 5.4 Trees and Green Spaces

The Leys is the most important area of green space that contributes to the character of the Conservation Area; although lying outside of the boundary, it impacts positively upon the attractive setting of the village. The land is a surviving part of the farmland and park to the south and west of the village and was donated by the Pearce family to the parish. Since 2010, the Parish Council has commenced the planting of a row of native rowan trees either side of a natural pathway that runs the length of the park, known as Celebration Avenue. The remnants of the orchard that formed part of the gardens of the Convent on High Street are also being restored.



The appearance of the village is greatly enhanced by the number of mature trees within private gardens, and a number of them are protected by Tree Preservation Order on account of their high amenity value. Conservation area status affords protection to all trees within the Conservation Area, since 6-week notice must be given to the Borough Council of all proposed work to enable consideration of whether further preservation orders are justified.





## 5.5 Building materials and details

The following sections identify the traditional building materials and local details that contribute to the appearance of the village and provide a guide for appropriate styles and new building.

### Walls

The distinctive appearance of the village is largely due to the consistent use of locally available stone - primarily sandy-coloured Pendle limestone, but with some subtle variations in colour where iron was present. The stone was usually coursed rubble but with some dressed stone on Georgian houses. Quoins are usually of a harder, more durable limestone.

Some buildings – notably the Old Post Office on High Street – were built in a deeper golden ironstone, likely to have come from beds within the Northampton Sand formation.



*The Old Post Office, built of dressed ironstone with a rubble stone plinth. Decorative stone windows and drip moulds are distinctive features of a high status building. The steep roof pitch and gable parapets suggest the building would originally have been thatched.*





*This Georgian house on Cattle Hill is urban in character and reflects the diversity of building styles within the village; coursed limestone with more durable flush quoins and hipped slate roof. The Doric style porch and tall sash windows are attractive Classical features of late 18<sup>th</sup> & early 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings.*



*The Old Rectory on Elwes Way – 17<sup>th</sup> century coursed limestone re-faced with smooth ashlar blocks in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; limestone was normally used in coursed rubble form and cut ashlar is not common within the village*

The front elevation of traditional buildings tend to have a simple, uncluttered appearance, with a larger proportion of solid masonry in relation to the size of openings; this is likely to have reflected the limited span that was possible using timber lintels. Georgian and later 19<sup>th</sup> century houses show a greater emphasis towards symmetry in design.

A group of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings at the southern end of High Street, such as the Methodist Chapel and Chapel Row, were constructed in red brick but otherwise brick is not a common material within the village. Some brick buildings have been rendered or the walls painted (notably Our Lady's RC church).

Recent infill development is inevitably built of modern materials, such as light coloured brick, but by choosing the right colour and texture, the effect has blended into the village scene.

## Roofs

The predominant roofing material in the village is blue-grey Welsh slate, which became cheaply available with the coming of the railways from the 1850s onwards and quickly replaced traditional roofing materials such as thatch.

The steep pitch and gable parapet of many of the roofs in the village indicates buildings that are likely to have originally been thatched, which was the most common roofing material for medium and low status buildings until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century; this is likely to have been long straw with a simple flush ridge that was traditionally used throughout the Midlands. The only remaining thatched roof is at the Elwes Arms, but this is now reed with a block-cut ridge.



*Reed thatch with block cut ridge on the Elwes Arms; the larger proportion of solid walling to window is characteristic of vernacular buildings.*

Orange-red clay pantiles are also found, most notably on St Anthony's Cottage and adjoining hall on Elwes Way. Pantiles required a lightweight roof structure and provided an inexpensive roof cover for cottages or outbuildings. More recently, some roofs have been replaced with concrete interlocking tiles; although some of these have mellowed, they are

not a traditional material and their widespread use would affect the appearance of the village.

There is also a limited number of plain clay tiled roofs, usually as a replacement for earlier roofing material, such as on the Old Post Office on High Street.

Chimneys, usually on the gable end and often built or re-built in brick owing to its better heat resistance than stone, are a prominent and attractive feature of many of the buildings and should be retained, even if no longer used. Projecting chimney stacks are not a traditional detail.

### Eaves detailing

Roof and eaves heights vary, particularly along High Street, and creates visual interest. The characteristic roof is a simple gable with plain eaves; hipped roofs were more costly to construct and are normally associated with higher status buildings. There are some original dormer windows and a number of latter additions, but they are not a common detail within the village.

Verges are often in the form of coped gable parapets - particularly where the building was originally thatched - although on smaller cottages the verge is more likely to be plain. Rain water goods are traditionally painted cast iron with the gutters supported on iron rise and fall brackets spiked directly into the wall. Fascia boards are not common, although decorative bargeboards are an attractive feature of the front gables of the 19<sup>th</sup> century estate houses on High Street and Church Walk.

### Windows

The style of window largely depends on the age and status of the property. Higher status properties, such as the Old Post Office, are likely to have had stone mullioned windows beneath stone hood moulds, with the frames made of iron with small leaded panes. Early vernacular cottages generally have timber, horizontal side hung, two or three casement windows beneath simple timber lintels. Vertical sliding sash windows are a detail associated with Classical styles of building from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Brick lintels and window surrounds are found on some of the 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings. Top hung opening windows are not a traditional detail. There are some upvc windows within the village, widespread introduction of which would be likely to harm the traditional appearance.

### Doors

The type of door and door surround also varies according to the status and age of the building. The earliest doors are simple, solid ledged and braced. Panelled doors with a fanlight are not a feature of early vernacular buildings but are associated with Georgian and 19<sup>th</sup> century domestic buildings. Enclosed porches are not a common feature of traditional buildings within the village

## 5.6 Boundary walls

Unbroken lengths of stone boundary wall, particularly along High Street, Elwes Way and Church Walk, are a defining feature of the village. The walls are of historic interest in their own right but also contribute to the high level of visual harmony. Copings are often alternate long and short vertical stones (known as cock and hen) and are an attractive feature which should be retained.





*Good quality coursed limestone boundary walls, such as these on Elwes Way and High Street, are an important and attractive feature of the village.*



## 5.7 Public realm

An attractive feature of the village is the use of traditional lanterns for street lighting – either mounted on buildings or on posts - and complement the village scene. Where present, low height kerbs are usually made of concrete with tarmac footpaths and roads, although there are some surviving granite kerbstones. The granite setts that form a path across Church Walk are of historic importance and should be retained (section 5.1.5). Road humps have been effective in slowing through traffic along High Street village. Traditional grass verges provide an attractive and informal highway boundary but are susceptible to damage by vehicles.

## **6. Buildings making a positive contribution**

A number of buildings within the Conservation Area are recognised as being of national architectural or historic importance by inclusion on the National Heritage List for England and are listed in the following grades:

Church of St Andrew - grade A

Nos. 6 , Priors Piece & 8 (The Chantry), Church Walk – grade II

No.27 Church Walk – grade II

The Old Rectory, Elwes Way – grade II

Nos 17 (The Manor House) & 17A (Manor Lodge), Elwes Way – grade II

No.23 Elwes Way – grade II

War memorial, Elwes Way/High Street – grade II

No. 20 (The Old Post Office), High Street –grade II

No.29 (The Old Convent), High Street – grade II,

No.37 (Elwes Arms), High Street – grade II

No 1 Cattle Hill – grade II

No 18 Pound Lane – grade II

However, there are a number of other buildings which, although not of national significance, make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This contribution may be in one or more of the following ways:

- landmark buildings;
- those which provide evidence of the village's history and development;
- buildings of local architectural interest or local style;
- groups of buildings which make a positive contribution to the streetscene.

Conservation area status means that there should be a presumption in favour of the retention of buildings which make a positive contribution. The following buildings in Great Billing are considered to fall within these categories and are candidates for inclusion on the Local List of Buildings of Importance for Northampton. The list is not exhaustive and the



absence of a particular building does not imply that it is not of significance to the Conservation Area.

## **High Street**

### Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and St Anselm

The white painted stone/brick church originated as the village school in 1845 and was converted and extended in the 1860s; the Italianate-style slim brick tower with tall slits dates from the 1920s. The building is important to the social history and is a landmark within the village.



### Home Farm, High Street

Attractive, honey coloured, coursed ironstone former farmhouse, symmetrical with pantiled roof, extended with eaves level dormers and dated 1900. Stone barns and out buildings within the curtilage of the farmhouse also contribute to the historic character of the village.



Nos. 16 & 18, 17-27 High Street & 11-19 Church Walk,

There are several pairs of distinctive estate workers' houses, designed by EF Law and dating from improvements to the estate made by Valentine Cary-Elwes in the 1860s; they reflect the origins of Great Billing as an estate village. The houses on High Street were built in pairs to minimise costs, of coursed stone with brick detailing, prominent brick chimneys and front gables with decorative barge boards, set behind front gardens. Some have retained their original casement windows and, on Church Walk, front railings and gates. The houses on Church Walk are linked.



*Former estate workers' houses on High Street and Church Walk, dating from 1866.*





### No 14 High Street

This is a good quality, three storey former farmhouse and rear wing that is visually dominant at the southern end of the Conservation Area, overlooking the Nene valley. It forms an attractive entry point to the village.



### Methodist Chapel

The plain and simple brick box with attractive arched windows, dating from 1835, is typical of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Wesleyan chapel and is important to the social history of the village. It also contributes to a group of interesting brick buildings at the southern end of the village



### Nos. 11 & 15 High Street

Adjacent to the chapel, the brick and part rendered house and outbuilding at No.15 High Street and the adjacent house at No. 11 mark the entrance to the Conservation Area and contrast with new development to the south.



### Chapel Row

Three-storey, mid-19<sup>th</sup> century row of houses, with a brick front but plain stone rear elevation and rendered gable that is prominent in the street scene and of a scale and urban form that is unusual within the Conservation Area .





## **Cattle Hill**

### Nos 2-4 Cattle Hill

Good quality, late 18<sup>th</sup> century stone farmhouse, prominent at corner of High Street.



### Nos 3, 5 & 7 Cattle Hill (above right)

Row of late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century farm worker's cottages with pantile roofs which again reflect the historic origins of the village.

## **Pound Lane**

### Nos 2-12 Pound Lane

Attractive row of small cottages facing directly onto the lane; originally farm buildings that were altered and converted, with a brick frontage added, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to provide accommodation for estate workers.



### No.16 Pound Lane

17<sup>th</sup> century rubble stone cottage that, together with No.18 Pound Lane, form a pair of historically important buildings (No.18 is grade II listed).

### No.1-3 Pound Lane

Converted former farm building at end of the lane, possibly 18<sup>th</sup> century (below).



### **Elwes Way**

#### St Anthony's Cottage and hall

Attractive late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century cottage and attached hall, built in stone with a pantiled roof; the buildings have variously been used as the village post office, institute and school.





## Presbytery

Associated with the adjacent Old Convent, the building is prominent at the junction with High Street; the principal elevation faces the garden with a largely blank elevation with later inserted sash windows facing the road. It contributes to an attractive group comprising St Anthony's Cottage and the War Memorial on the opposite side of Elwes Way.



## Herewyt House

Partly hidden behind the boundary wall, a highly distinctive house described in Pevsner<sup>2</sup> as “Colonial Georgian” in style and an early example of a Colt Cedarwood house, with a cedar boarded façade between brick pilasters and chimneys; built 1932 on the site of the Hall's kitchen garden for Gervase Elwes's sister, Maud and designed by Guy Elwes, the architect son of Gervase.



<sup>2</sup> Pevsner Buildings of England: Northamptonshire p493

### Manor Farmhouse & converted farm buildings, Manor Farm Road

Manor Farmhouse stands at the western end of Elwes Way; the prominent 18<sup>th</sup> century building has its principal elevation facing south, overlooking what would have been the farm. Stone outbuildings, barns and stables on Manor Farm Road have been sympathetically converted to residential use and are important to the history and character of the village.



*Manor Farmhouse from Elwes Way*



*Converted stables/coach house on Manor Farm Road – the former Manor Farm buildings contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and reflect the village's agricultural origins*



### Oldways, 7 Elwes Way

Extended, late 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, visible from Elwes Way.

### Nos. 21 Elwes Way & 31 Church Walk

17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century cottages and converted outbuildings which, together with the listed buildings at 23 Elwes Way and 27 Church Walk, form an attractive and historic group along the west side of Elwes Way.



### **Church Walk**

#### Old Dairy, 4 Church Walk

Converted dairy to Great Billing Hall; the ice house for the Hall also survives within the garden.

#### Nos. 21 & 23 Church Walk

Late 18<sup>th</sup> century converted farm buildings (below) that reflect the origins of the village.



### Nos.33-35 Church Walk

Pair of low stone cottages, probably dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, attractively located facing the footpath leading to St Andrew's Church (photograph at para. 5.1.4).

### **7. Neutral and Negative Features**

There are few elements which detract from the overall quality of Great Billing as a well maintained and attractive environment. The last review of the Conservation Area in 1989 identified the woodyard at the junction of High Street and Church Walk as being in need of screening; the sympathetic redevelopment of the site to form Old Carpenters Close has successfully removed the visual harm.

Although there has been some loss of original details, such as doors and windows that have been replaced with upvc or the use of concrete roofing tiles, these have not detracted from the overall appearance of buildings within the area. However, more widespread loss of original features could cumulatively erode the special appearance of the Conservation Area.

In some parts of the Conservation Area (notably along Pound Lane and Church Walk), overhead power cables and poles are unsightly and detract from the street scene; if possible, their burial underground would be beneficial.



*Overhead powerlines detract from the overall appearance of the Conservation Area; any opportunity to have them buried underground should be taken.*

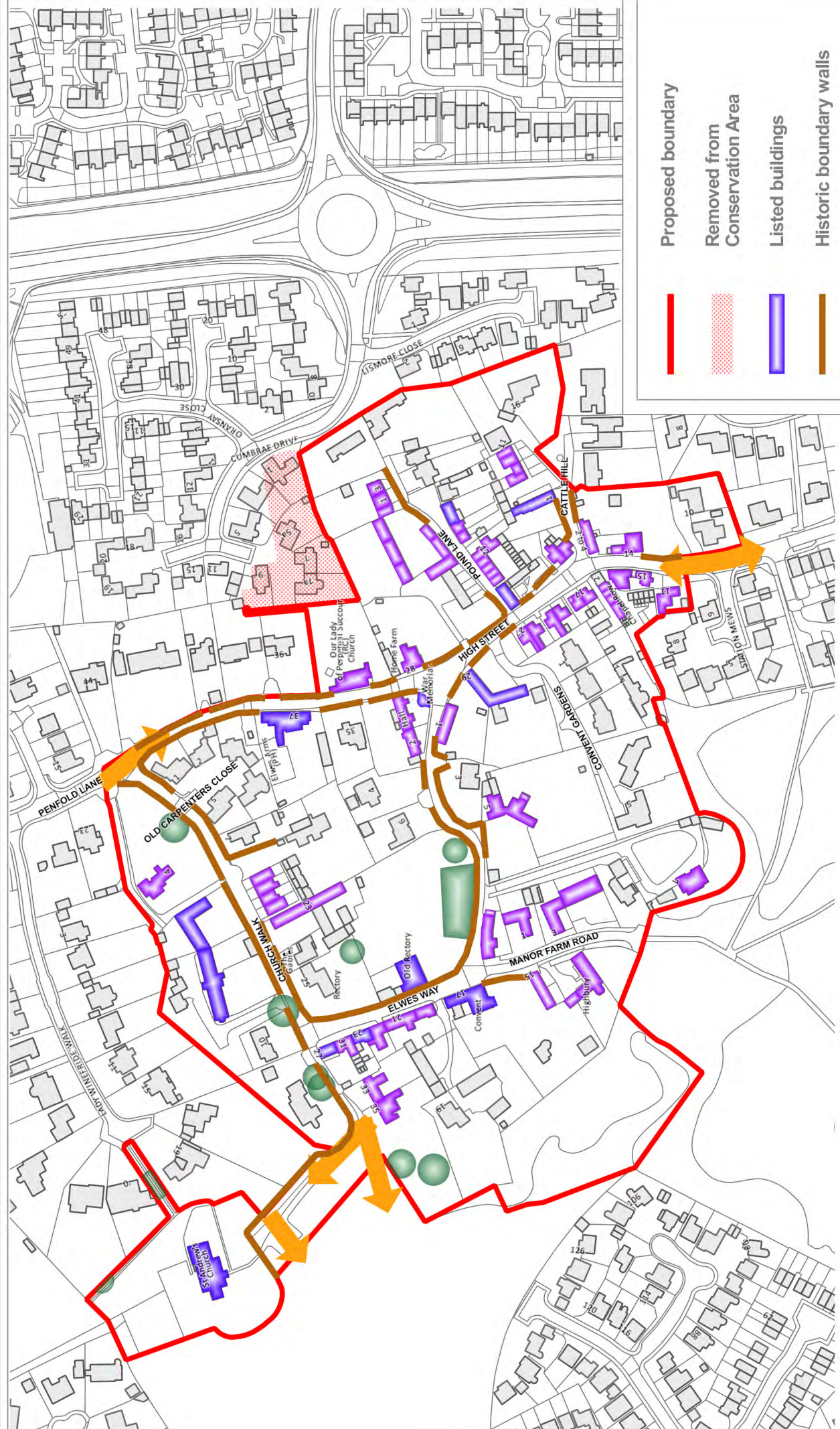


## **8. The Conservation Area boundary**

8.1 Section 69 of the Listed Buildings Act requires the local authority to consider whether an area retains sufficient architectural or historic interest to justify its special status as a conservation area, or whether cancellation of the designation or alteration to the boundary is appropriate.

8.2 Great Billing Conservation Area was designated in 1976 and was extended as part of the last review in 1989 to include St Andrew's Church. Although there has been some infill development since the original designation, the preceding sections indicate that the area has retained its special interest. It is not, therefore, proposed to cancel the conservation area designation.

8.3 However, the conservation area boundary inadvertently included some of the properties on Culbrae Drive, part of an estate built in the mid-1990s off Great Billing Way, to the east of the Church of Our Lady and Home Farm, after the last review was undertaken. The opportunity has been taken to realign the conservation area boundary to the east of the Church of Our Lady and north of the former farm buildings on Pound Lane to exclude Nos 1, 5a, 7, 7a & 9 Culbrae Drive, whilst retaining within the Conservation Area the section of stone wall that forms the rear garden boundary of 7a and 9 Culbrae Drive and properties on High Street and is of historic interest. The revised Great Billing Conservation Area is shown on the map on the following page.



Proposed boundary	Removed from Conservation Area	Listed buildings	Historic boundary walls	Important buildings	Important views	Tree Preservation Orders

**Great Billing Conservation Area spatial analysis**

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**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**



## **9. Management Plan**

### 9.1 Threats and Vulnerabilities

The character and appearance of Great Billing Conservation Area is vulnerable and could potentially be harmed by a number of factors. The following section identifies potential threats and suggests possible management proposals (*italics*)

### 9.2 Opportunities for Management and Enhancement

#### **New development in the Conservation Area**

Due to the proximity to Northampton and the quality of the environment, Great Billing is a popular village. Where infill development is proposed, it is important that the design, scale and proposed materials are sensitive to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting and do not harm important views.

Successful new development should:

- Relate well to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land
- Reflect the context of existing development
- Respect important views
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings
- Use materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings and respect existing materials palette.

*New development will be expected to respond sensitively and creatively to the historic environment.*

#### **Retain original features**

There is a high quality of historic buildings within the Conservation Area, but due to the relatively few buildings with statutory protection, there has been some loss of traditional architectural detailing. Minor alterations to non-listed buildings is permitted development and does not require planning permission but can gradually erode the special appearance and character of the area. Such changes include replacing windows and doors with non-traditional materials or styles, replacing roof materials, re-pointing with hard cement mortar, adding satellite dishes or painting brick or stone walls. Owners of all buildings in the Conservation Area are encouraged to use appropriate materials and methods, and where possible reverse any previous inappropriate replacements.

Original window frames can often be repaired and upgraded and do not always require replacement. Double glazed units can often be fitted into existing timber sash or casement frames. Where windows are beyond repair, like-for-like replacement will help to conserve the appearance of the property. Secondary glazing can often be a cheaper and less intrusive alternative. Original, slightly distorted glass should be retained wherever possible.

Where original doors survive, these should be retained and when proposing new doors they should be appropriate to the age and style of the building. Retention, repair or like-for-like replacement of original features can help to preserve the appearance of the Conservation Area and make a very positive contribution.

#### **Possible Article 4 Direction**

In six conservation areas in Northampton, householder permitted development rights have been removed. This means that planning permission is required to alter the external appearance of houses where the alteration is visible from public areas, such as changing windows or doors from timber to upvc, changing the roof material, adding a porch or paving front gardens. This allows for the impact of the alteration on the character and appearance of the conservation area to be assessed.

*Ascertain through the public consultation on the Appraisal whether there is support in principle for an Article 4 direction within Great Billing Conservation Area. If there is support, formal consultation will then be undertaken.*

### **Renewable energy sources**

Whilst the Council is supportive of the sustainable energy agenda it also recognises that many sources of renewable energy and micro-generation have the potential to harm the character and appearance of a Conservation Area. Within a Conservation Area, solar panels require planning permission when placed on a wall (but not a roof slope) facing the street. Care therefore needs to be taken to balance the needs of climate change with the preservation of the historic environment.

*Where consent is needed, encourage the sympathetic location of solar panels to inconspicuous building elevations where they will not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.*

### **Public realm**

Where possible, opportunities should be taken to enhance areas of paving and surfacing. Street furniture and signs affect the appearance of the Conservation Area; unnecessary clutter would have an adverse effect on the character and should be resisted. Railings and lamp posts should be painted black. Any opportunity to have overhead cables placed underground would be welcome.

*Encourage statutory undertakers to rationalise and remove unnecessary clutter within the Conservation Area and replace with appropriate solutions. Work with the highway authority to improve surfacing and avoid the insertion of inappropriate kerbing and footpaths which would have a harmful urbanising effect.*

### **Tree management**

There a number of mature trees which contribute to the appearance of Great Billing but this element of the character of the village is vulnerable - an example being the recent unavoidable felling of the large Wellingtonia on High Street. Designation as a conservation area affords protection to trees since 6 weeks' notice has to be given to the Council of any work to a tree with a diameter of more than 75mm at a point 1.5 metres above ground; this then allows the Council to consider whether a Tree Preservation Order should be made. It is an offence to undertake unauthorised work to a protected tree within a Conservation Area.



*Large mature trees should be retained wherever possible in order to preserve the character of the Conservation Area. Opportunities should be taken as appropriate to plant young trees in order to ensure the continued existence of mature trees in the future. Applications for planning permission which affect trees need to be supported by a tree survey.*

### **Satellite antennae**

Satellite dishes and antenna are not traditional features and can harm the appearance of a conservation area. Satellite dishes require planning permission where they would face and be visible from the street.

*Where consent is needed, satellite dishes or antennae should be located in an inconspicuous position as possible to prevent harm to the historic character and visual appearance of the Conservation Area.*

### **Infill development**

Some properties in Great Billing have space behind or beside them which may be considered suitable for infill development. Inappropriate infill development which would result in the loss of important views or harm the relationship between existing buildings and the spaces around them should be avoided. The scale, massing and proportion of buildings, the setting of historic buildings and the spaces between them are important in retaining the distinctive character of the Conservation Area, particularly when such scale and massing defines different character areas within the Conservation Area. Intensification of development which would not be in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area should be resisted.

*Any development proposing the infill of a site, or the subdivision of a plot, should reflect the scale, massing and layout within the Conservation Area and does not harm important views.*

### **Development affecting the setting of the Conservation Area**

Although now within the built-up area of Northampton, Great Billing has retained its separate and individual identity. It is important that new development within, or in proximity to, the Conservation Area respects the setting of the village and has regard to views into and out of the Conservation Area.

*The impact of development on the setting of the Conservation Area is a material planning consideration. This applies equally to development outside the Conservation Area if it is likely to affect the setting of the Conservation Area.*

### **Boundary walls**

Stone boundary walls form a significant element of the character of the Conservation Area. Walls taller than one metre next to a highway and two metres elsewhere in a Conservation Area are protected from demolition. Lower walls which contribute to the character should also be protected where possible. New boundary walls, particularly those in prominent locations and fronting highways should be constructed from similar stone to those existing and be appropriate in the massing and coursing to fit the current character.

*Boundary walls which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and their copings should be retained. New boundary treatments should fit with the appearance of existing boundary walls.*

### 9.3 Buildings of Local Importance

The Appraisal has identified a number of buildings which, although not listed, are particularly important to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The general presumption will be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution and they will receive special scrutiny if major changes requiring planning permission are proposed. The list is not exhaustive and the absence of any particular building or feature does not imply that it is not of significance within the Conservation Area.

The buildings will also be considered for inclusion on a proposed Local Heritage List for Northampton.

### 9.4 Enforcement Strategy

Where there is clear evidence of a breach of planning law, national and local policy will be enforced. In cases where it is necessary, it will be carried out in a fair, clear and consistent manner. Information and advice will be available before any formal action is taken and an opportunity provided to discuss the circumstances of the case and an opportunity will be given to resolve problems. Please report possible unauthorised works to the Planning Enforcement Team.

### 9.5 Generic Guidance

Northampton Borough Council publishes guidance on Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Tree Preservation Orders and that is available on the Council's web site [www.northampton.gov.uk](http://www.northampton.gov.uk) or from the Planning Policy & Conservation Section.

Anyone wishing to make changes to buildings within the Conservation Area or affecting its setting is strongly advised to contact the Planning section at the earliest opportunity to discuss their proposals and establish any requirements for formal consent, at:

Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning,

Northampton Borough Council,

The Guildhall,

St Giles Square,

Northampton NN1 1DE

Tel. 0300 330 7000

Email: [planning@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:planning@northampton.gov.uk)

Please note that a charge may be made for some pre-application advice.



## 10. References and Contact Details

### 10.1 References

Bailey, B, Pevsner, N & Cherry, B, The Buildings of England: Northamptonshire (2013)

Gover J E B, The Place-Names of Northamptonshire (1975)

Northamptonshire County Federation of Women's Institutes, Northamptonshire Villages (2002)

Sutherland, D S, Northamptonshire Stone (2003)

Victoria History of the Counties of England: Northamptonshire

Ward, K A Guide to St Andrew's Church, Great Billing (1990)

### 10.2 Internet sources

Billing Hall – Wikipedia

England's Lost Country Homes [www.lostheritage.org.uk](http://www.lostheritage.org.uk)

British History Online: Great Billing

Historic England Advice Note 1 Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: (2016) <http://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning>

For further information on historic buildings and local history, Central Library on Abington Street and Northamptonshire Records Office have a local history collection.

### 10.3 Sources of further information

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) [www.spab.org.uk](http://www.spab.org.uk)

Ancient Monuments Society [www.ams.org.uk](http://www.ams.org.uk)

Georgian Group [www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)

Victorian Society [www.victoriansociety.org.uk](http://www.victoriansociety.org.uk)

### 10.4 Community Involvement

A draft version of this appraisal was subject to public consultation with Billing Parish Council and local residents from 30<sup>th</sup> October until 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and comments received, wherever possible, have been incorporated in the adopted version.