

ABINGTON PARK CONSERVATION AREA

Draft Conservation Area Appraisal

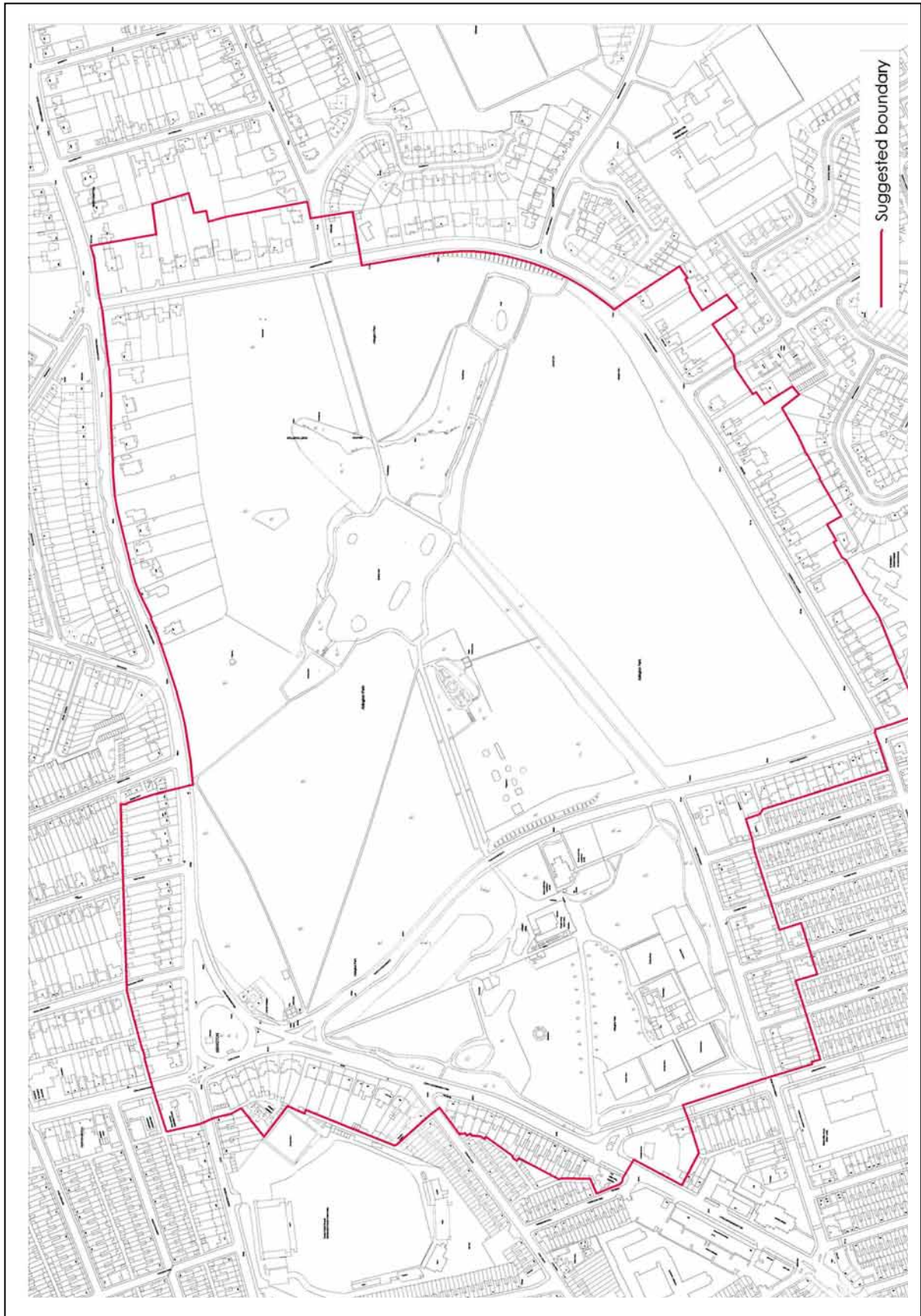
1. Introduction

- 1.1. Abington Park is a remarkable survival of an 18th century parkland landscape which has, with Northampton's continuing expansion, evolved into one of the town's main public parks. The residential areas surrounding the park are equally significant; the majority were developed over a short period from the turn of the 20th century and although individual buildings vary greatly in design, their complementary styles and materials have produced a range of buildings whose quality and consistency are unique in Northampton for that date.
- 1.2. Quite apart from their amenity value, Victorian and Edwardian urban parks are increasingly being seen in the same light as other historic designed landscapes, and Abington Park is important as a link between the two traditions. Although the park itself is protected by virtue of its public ownership, its environs are exposed to the constant development pressures common to all towns, and the proposed conservation area is one means of managing change in a sensitive and consistent manner.
- 1.3. Conservation areas were first introduced by the Civic Amenities Act in 1967, which has subsequently been revised and replaced. Section 69.1a of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local authorities to identify those parts of their area that are of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and to designate them as conservation areas. Local authorities also have a duty to review their conservation areas from time to time.
- 1.4. The designation of a conservation area can be a legitimate response to an actual or perceived threat to the character of the area. The key consideration, however, must be whether they are of sufficient architectural or historic interest to warrant designation rather than whether designation would provide additional controls.
- 1.5. Section 71 also places a duty on local authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of their conservation areas.
- 1.6. The primary objectives of the conservation area are:
 - a) to preserve worthy buildings and prevent their demolition unless this is shown to be the only suitable action,
 - b) to ensure that redevelopment, renovation or the extension of existing buildings will harmonise with other buildings in the area,
 - c) to preserve or enhance the setting of the area
 - d) to encourage positive schemes for the restoration of buildings within the area.

2. Purpose of Assessment

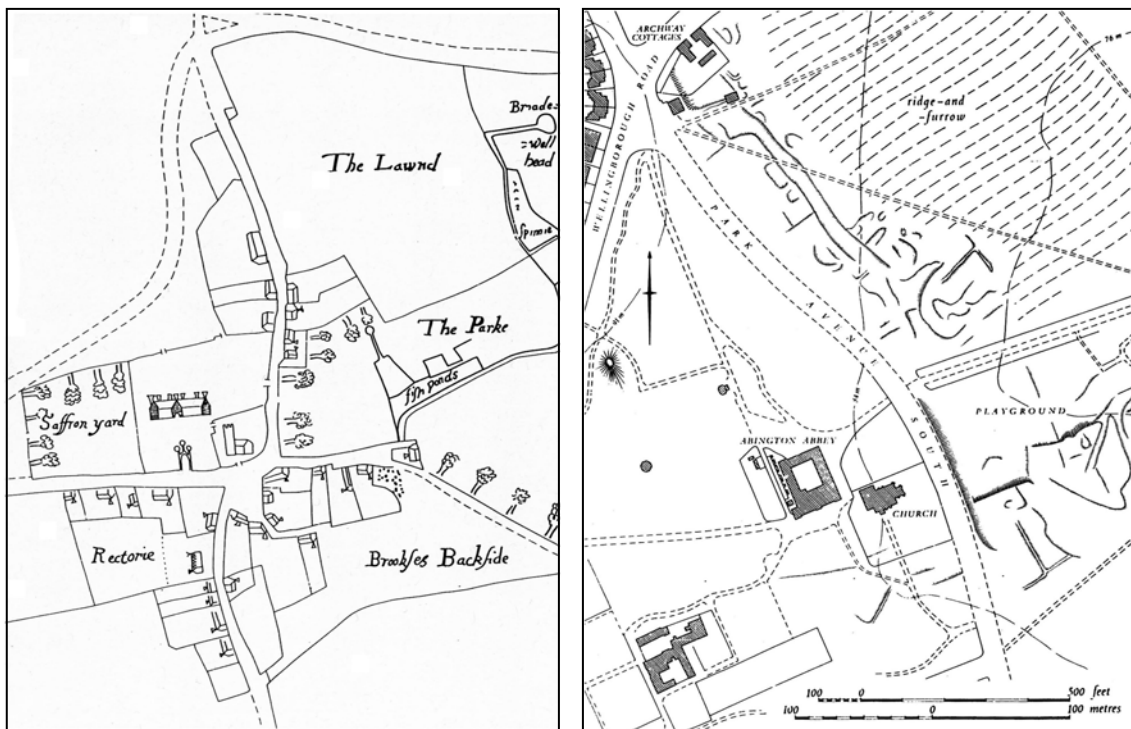
- 2.1. The purpose of this assessment is to provide evidence to support the designation of a conservation area based on Abington Park and once designated, a basis for

further guidance for owners and occupiers on how the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the area can be achieved. It will also provide a sound basis for the assessment of planning applications and will then help identify proposals for preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the area.



3. History & Development

- 3.1. The proposed conservation area lies 1km east of the centre of Northampton, and covers an area of 67ha. The area encompasses the whole of Abington Park, east and west of Park Avenue South, and includes much of the distinctive late 19th and early 20th century residential development fronting the park, particularly to the north, south and west.
- 3.2. The oldest surviving building in the area is the church of St Peter & St Paul, which was recorded in the Domesday Book, although the earliest part of the present fabric dates from the 12th century. Although it now stands in isolation next to Abington Abbey, the church originally served the village of Abington, which was cleared when the area was 'emparked' in the 18th century. A 1671 map of Abington (Map 2) shows the village as centred on the church, in front of which was an open square and crossroads. The route north to Wellingborough Road is still identifiable as a hollow-way although no trace survives of the road which led westwards from the square roughly parallel to, and north of, Christchurch Road. The roads and square are shown flanked by buildings, but these survive only as earthworks to the east of Park Avenue South. These earthworks, including a ridge and furrow field system, are shown on the RCHME survey (Map 3).



Abington Medieval Village: Map 2 left – from a 1671 plan; Map 3 right – present day archaeological remains.

From RCHME – *An Inventory of Archaeological Sites & Churches in Northampton*

- 3.3. Abington Abbey incorporates elements of the original 16th century manor house but was extensively re-modelled in the 18th century, when the south and east elevations were re-fronted. Other significant buildings within the park associated with the Abbey include the 1678 Water Tower, which was a combined well house and dovecote, the early 19th century hunting gate and Archway Cottages on

Wellingborough Road. The pair of 17th century thatched cottages at Abington Park Farm south-west of the Abbey were used as the rectory until 1846.

- 3.4. Abington Abbey passed through several hands and eventually was leased for use as a private asylum between 1845 and 1892. Deciding that its future was more secure in public ownership, in 1892 the owners, Lord & Lady Wantage, gave the Abbey and 8ha of surrounding parkland to the Borough of Northampton for use as a 'people's park'. The Borough Council purchased a further 18ha the following year and after extensive improvement works, this area was opened as a public park in 1897 in commemoration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The Abbey was converted to a museum, and further land acquisitions and improvements followed, so that by 1904 Abington Park had reached its present extent.
- 3.5. Abington Park was originally surrounded by agricultural land but by the turn of the 20th century the town's eastwards expansion had reached its north-western edge, and work had started on the construction of Park Avenue South, extending from Wellingborough Road as far as St Peter & St Paul's church. The land to the south and west of the park remained wholly undeveloped; the only building in the area was the replacement rectory of 1846, which now lies to the rear of the houses along Abington Park Crescent.
- 3.6. Concurrent with the construction of Park Avenue South, the grid pattern of streets to the north and west of Wellingborough Road was laid out, and this area was developed between 1900 and 1925. The premium plots overlooking the park were reserved for more substantial individual houses, and the first phase, along Christchurch Road and the return into Sandringham Road, was developed from 1905 onwards. This was originally known as the Alexandra Park Estate, and includes several highly idiosyncratic houses designed by the Scots architect Alexander Anderson.
- 3.7. The slightly later development to the south and east of Abington Park is characterised by more generous plots and hence much larger buildings. This trend culminated in the sequence of villas along Wellingborough Road, in the far north-eastern corner of the park. These are substantial, individually-designed dwellings set within their own grounds.

4. Architectural and Townscape Character

- 4.1. The extent of the conservation area encompasses the whole of Abington Park and includes those residential properties fronting the park along parts of Christchurch Road, Park Avenue South, Abington Park Crescent and Wellingborough Road which are of particular merit in architectural or townscape terms. The line of the proposed conservation area boundary has been designed to be geographically coherent and follows property boundaries, or other readily identifiable topographic features, wherever practicable.

Park Avenue South

- 4.2. Park Avenue South bisects the conservation area in a roughly north-south direction, linking Billing Road with Wellingborough Road. Although it is one of the main traffic arteries across the eastern side of Northampton, it is very much a positive feature of the conservation area. The road was laid out to generous standards and has broad footpaths, together with double avenues of mature horse chestnut trees on both sides. Only a handful of the houses on Park Avenue South which fall within the

conservation area predate the First World War, but those built in the interwar years are of comparable styles and demonstrate the enduring influence of crafts-based building traditions.

- 4.3. All are of two storeys and are a mixture of detached and terraced forms, but most were designed and built separately and make extensive use of features such as boldly projecting bay windows, gables and porches to assert their individuality. Nevertheless the use of common materials such as brick and tiles and, particularly, smooth or pebbledash render, helps to unify the group. This applies even to a building as unconventional as No 55, designed by Alexander Anderson in 1908, and the only real exception to the general unity is No 47a, a 1970s building whose horizontal emphasis and materials mark it out.

Abington Park Crescent

- 4.4. Abington Park Crescent is on a similar generous scale to Park Avenue South and sweeps round in a single curve to form the southern and eastern boundaries of Abington Park. It broadly follows the line of former field boundaries, and the road was laid out after the final land purchases which established the park in its present extent.
- 4.5. Although the development on this section of Abington Park Crescent is generally contemporary with Park Avenue South and Christchurch Road, there are significant differences, especially in terms of form and scale. For example, when the land between Park Avenue South and what became Landcross Drive was sold in 1903, several covenants were attached restricting any development to private houses, setting a minimum rateable value for the properties and specifying a minimum distance for the properties to be set back from the highway. This established a pattern for large detached or semi-detached houses set in generous gardens, unlike the smaller continuous terraces elsewhere.
- 4.6. The style of the houses is broadly similar to those mentioned above but is commensurately grander, and several display obvious Arts & Crafts references. Particularly noteworthy are Nos 5-6 and 11-12, large 'semis' which both have informally composed elevations with dominant gables, bay windows and pebble-dashed upper storeys. The slightly later Nos 22A-23 of 1923 are in a similar vein and are attributed to R. Barry Parker, the pioneer garden city architect. Nos 26-28 are of an almost identical design and may be by the same architect.
- 4.7. There are a number of later houses on this side of Abington Park Crescent which although in radically different styles, are of equally accomplished design, and their successful integration into the townscape shows that good design rather than style is the key to contextualism. For example No 22 is a classic 1930s 'Moderne' villa, complete with horizontal Critall's windows, balconies overlooking the park and elaborate gates based on an abstract geometric motif. By contrast No 27 is a 1970s house whose forms and materials show the influence of the more subtle strands of Modernism which flourished in Scandinavia.
- 4.8. The sequence of post-war houses on the west side of Abington Park Crescent, from south of Bridgewater Avenue and north towards Weston Way, are not of special interest and are excluded from the proposed conservation area.
- 4.9. However Nos 57-59 on the corner of Weston Way and Abington Park Crescent, are the first of another sequence of high quality, predominantly interwar era villas which are included within the proposed conservation area. No 61 in particular is a very

accomplished design which stands comparison with buildings from the heyday of the Arts & Crafts movement. It is notable for its complex interplay of roof forms, including a truncated spire over the porch, and high quality brick detailing, culminating in the imposing chimney which bisects the front elevation. The other interwar houses are less elaborate but continue the themes of informal massing, with dominant roofs and gables, and all have the same white rendered elevations. No 65 Abington Park Crescent ('Hycilla') is the only exception to this trend; it is a brick 1960s house whose composition of strong horizontals and projecting and receding elements is of unusual architectural sophistication.

- 4.10. Nos 72-80, the handful of post-war houses on the western side of Abington Park Crescent, are of less architectural interest but have been included within the proposed conservation area because, as villas set within attractive gardens, they conform to the prevailing grain of development. The area of Abington Park immediately south of No 72 is also of historical significance: this is the site of 14 barrack huts which were re-erected to provide 'temporary' two room houses during the post First World War housing crisis, as shown on the 1925-6 OS map.

Wellingborough Road

- 4.11. Wellingborough Road forms the north-western and northern edges of Abington Park, and as its name suggests, is historically one of the principal routes connecting Northampton with the east. The buildings along Wellingborough Road within the proposed conservation area developed over several decades and their character varies considerably so for the purposes of analysis, they are described moving eastwards from a start point at the junction of Wellingborough Road and Ardington Road.
- 4.12. The most distinctive building in this locality is Abington Park Hotel, an archetypal Victorian 'gin palace' in a riotous French Renaissance style dating from 1898. The hotel is listed and therefore protected already but is included within the conservation area because it is a landmark building which announces the presence of Abington Park when approaching from the town centre. Immediately north of the hotel, Nos 385-407 are a terrace of typical late 19th century town houses, of three storeys including attics, with two storey bay windows and heavy stone dressings. They are chiefly notable for the prominence of their attic dormers, which are expressed as either pitched, or in some cases Flemish, gables. Although they are ostensibly a single terrace, these houses were actually built in two phases, as only the first five (Nos 385-393) are shown on the 1900-1 OS map.
- 4.13. The adjoining Nos 411-425 Wellingborough Road are a rather more distinguished series of early 20th century houses. Although they are essentially a terrace, the 'handing' of each adjacent house is reversed so that repeating elements (gables, bay windows, porches etc) are staggered and any monotony of rhythm is avoided. The architecture refers to the so-called 'Bedford Park style', after the widely influential London suburb, and relies on 'balanced asymmetry' and the detailing of a few elements for effect. Thus a simple palette of red brick and tiles is used, with white render on the upper storeys and 'half-timbering' to the gables. The details are equally restrained and principally include two storey bay windows, projecting porch canopies and white-painted timber sash and casement windows. The chief exception is the end house, No 425, which occupies the plot at the junction with Wantage Road. This building demonstrates the classic Victorian and Edwardian

response to an acutely angled site, and deploys a polygonal tower with a spire, which 'turns' the corner effectively and forms a local landmark.

- 4.14. North of Wantage Road, the houses fronting Wellingborough Road and Park Avenue within the proposed conservation area continue many of the same themes but there is a marked change in scale; all of these buildings are large semi-detached villas of three storeys including attics. Nos 431-433 and 435-437 are identical designs with prominent twin gables and projecting bay windows dominating the front elevations, with the upper storeys finished in smooth cream render. Nos 439-441 were built separately and their elevations differ considerably; No 439 is 'pebbledash' rendered at first floor level and No 441 makes extensive use of decorative stone dressings. Nevertheless their common use of prominent 'half-timbered' gables, red brick and white-painted timber sash and casement windows helps unify them as a single building. Nos 443-445 and 447-449 are identical designs and are slightly earlier than the neighbouring houses, being shown on the 1900-1 OS map. These houses are rather more formal, with symmetrical elevations and fairly restrained detailing, with decoration confined to the stone dressings around the windows.
- 4.15. The remaining houses on Park Avenue within the proposed conservation area are actually combinations of the same design. Nos 1-3 and 5-7 are true 'semis' whereas Nos 9-17 are a terrace made up of two 'handed' pairs with No 17 as an 'odd number' on the end. Their design is similar to those elsewhere with prominent twin gables, 'pebbledash' rendered upper floors, projecting bay windows and white-painted timber sash windows. More unusual features include the decorative brick dressings to the windows, and the small 'gablet' roofs to the projecting porch bays.
- 4.16. Nos 1-4 Abington Cottages to the rear of Nos 1-17 Park Avenue are also included within the proposed conservation area. These were built as almshouses in 1846 in a Tudor revival style and whilst they are already listed, they are significant to the conservation area in being one of only a few buildings which predate the expansion and development of Abington Park. Park Avenue Methodist Church, at the junction of Park Avenue North and Abington Avenue, is also included within the proposed conservation area because it is of considerable importance in both townscape and architectural terms. Its red brick tower is a prominent landmark in views both north and west along Wellingborough Road and its 'free' Perpendicular style is an unusual anachronism for its date (1925).
- 4.17. The north-west corner of the proposed conservation area follows a stretch of Abington Avenue which reverts to being Wellingborough Road beyond the island junction. The houses in this area, encompassing Nos 243-257 Abington Avenue and Nos 451-481a Wellingborough Road, were largely developed in the first quarter of the 20th century and are almost exclusively semi-detached villas. Although most are individual designs there is a remarkable degree of conformity; all are of two storeys plus attic, have prominent tiled roofs with 'half-timbered' gables, 'pebbledash' or smooth rendered upper storeys, projecting bay windows and white-painted timber casement windows. Although they are perfectly sound designs, all are typical of their era and only two buildings, both designed by Alexander Anderson, are especially distinguished. No 257 Abington Avenue dates from 1910 and although it is less distinctive than some of his other work, it has a particularly notable porch with Art Nouveau detailing. Rather more characteristic is No 471 Wellingborough Road, which dates from the late 1920s and abuts an earlier house. It has Anderson's typically eccentric combination of pitched and flat roofs, vertical slit windows in the gable end and stripped geometric detailing. East of Beech Avenue the north side of

Wellingborough Road is largely occupied by 1920s social housing which is not of special interest and is therefore excluded from the proposed conservation area.

- 4.18. However Nos 502-516, the sequence of houses on the south side of Wellingborough Road, is of particular importance. These buildings are anomalous in that they 'encroach' on the Abington Park side of the road but there is no evidence to suggest that this land was ever earmarked for inclusion within the park; their plots do not correspond to any historic field boundaries and most of the houses had been built by 1925.
- 4.19. These buildings are all large, ostentatious houses set within their own grounds, and represent styles fashionable in the first quarter of the 20th century. As a result there is no unifying theme, although most show traces of Arts & Crafts influence in their use of informal massing, dominant roofs, rendered upper storeys etc. The freedom afforded by generous plots allowed scope for more unusual plan forms and Nos 510 and 512 are notable for being largely square, as signified by their high pyramidal roofs. These buildings, along with No 514, show a particular concern for silhouette, and their vertical emphasis is reinforced by chimneys of exaggerated height.
- 4.20. There are two exceptions to this characterisation. The most striking is No 508, 'New Ways', designed for J. W. Bassett-Lowke in 1925-6 by the German architect Peter Behrens. Although a small, self-effacing building in comparison with its neighbours, 'New Ways' is significant as one of the earliest Modern Movement buildings in the UK, and is listed on that basis. Its street elevation displays Expressionist touches but the rear has more obvious pointers towards the International Style of the 1930s. No 516 is not as immediately distinctive but is notable as apart from Abington Abbey, it is the only classical building in the entire conservation area. It is a large, sober brick building of two storeys plus attic, with a gambrel roof and prominent chimneys. It is a good example of the Georgian Revival of the 1930s, which ironically, was more popular than Modernism at the time but has been wholly eclipsed by it since.

Ardington Road

- 4.21. Turning east from Abington Park Hotel, the proposed conservation area includes Ardington House between Ardington Road and Wellingborough Road, and No 2A Ardington Road immediately to the south. Ardington House is a detached 1930s villa with a symmetrical elevation and distinctive roof with tilted eaves, occupying spacious grounds in the angle of the junction. No 2A is a 1970s house in dark brick with a steeply pitched concrete tiled roof incorporating prominent dormers. Although it makes few concessions to context it is nevertheless of interest as a late 20th century response to the same criteria as earlier houses in the area. The remaining interwar housing on the west side of Ardington Road is not of special interest and is therefore excluded from the proposed conservation area.

Christchurch Road

- 4.22. Christchurch Road was one of the first streets to be laid out around the newly opened Abington Park and its development, originally rather grandly titled the 'Alexandra Park Estate', started in 1905 and continued into the 1930s. Christchurch Road, along with neighbouring Sandringham Road, is particularly notable for its concentration of houses designed by the Scots architect Alexander Anderson, and Anderson himself lived here in the 1920s. The 1925-6 OS map shows that only rather piecemeal development occurred within the first 20 years, and the time span

involved gives the street a rather disparate character. This is compounded by the fact that although the narrow plots produced contiguous terraces, all the houses were designed individually and vary in scale between one and three storeys.

- 4.23. Starting from the intersection of Christchurch Road with Ardington Road, Nos 8-20 Christchurch Road are typical of this mixture: only Nos 10 and 20 predate 1925, and Nos 12-14 are post-war infill. Apart from No 10, all the houses are of two storeys, with projecting bay windows, white-painted timber casements and red brick and 'pebbledash' render providing a measure of uniformity. However only the earliest buildings are particularly distinguished: No 10, which is of three storeys, is dominated by a full-height polygonal bay window, projecting above the eaves and capped by a tiled hipped roof. The timber casements of the bay window have stained glass upper lights and the cream rendered spandrels make an attractive contrast with its red brick. No 20 is atypical in that it occupies a double plot on the corner with Albany Road, and has a gabled cross wing and a prominent stair window on the front elevation.
- 4.24. The next sequence, Nos 22-36 Christchurch Road, postdates 1925 and this block displays a particularly marked contrast in scale and form: Nos 22-26 and No 36 are of three storeys including attics whereas Nos 28-34 are a two storey terrace with flat roofs. No 22 (which is of the same design as No 62) is an imposing building which displays a large expanse of flank wall, finished in 'pebbledash' and terminating in a half-hipped gable. Its Christchurch Road elevation is dominated by a full gable with a projecting bay window. No 24 and 26 continue the same architectural themes, with No 24 being distinguished by its unusually deep eaves and pair of hipped attic dormers.
- 4.25. Nos 28-34 are of a single build and are notable mainly for their flat roofed design. The street elevation was originally 'pebble-dashed' (Nos 30, 32 and 34 have subsequently been painted white) and the language of arched doorways and projecting bay windows would not be out of place on any interwar 'semi'. Indeed the building's rather awkward compromise between tradition and modernity is best exemplified by the non-functional triangular 'pediments' which interrupt the parapet. No 36, a three storey house on the corner with Sandringham Road, is perhaps the most distinguished of the group. Its polygonal bay window, although lower, is reminiscent of No 10 and the flank elevation to Sandringham Road is particularly notable. The design is extremely well-composed, with white render complementing both the red brick ground floor and the close studded 'half timbering' of the gable, setting off the elegant Art Nouveau door case.
- 4.26. The proposed conservation area also makes a short salient into Sandringham Road to include Nos 1 and 2, 'The Bungalow' and 'The Cottage' respectively, two distinctive houses designed in 1905 by Alexander Anderson. Notwithstanding its name, No 1 is actually a two storey building of a similar type to other Anderson designs in Christchurch Road and Park Avenue South. It has a flat roof concealed, not altogether convincingly, behind a false tiled Mansard at first floor level, and the two storey bay windows flank a continuous window with a half-cylindrical oriel in the centre. The building is finished in a lime green roughcast render with the name 'The Bungalow' picked out in typical Arts & Crafts lettering, and the front entrance is distinguished by a panel of green glazed tiles. No 2 is ostensibly a more conventional building in that it has a pitched tiled roof, albeit one of asymmetrical profile. It is somewhat larger than No 1 but shares the same two storey bay windows, which in this case are infilled by a jetty with the house name picked out as

before. The front elevation has a very deep tilted eaves which serves to roof the bay windows and jetty, and the building is finished in cream roughcast render.

- 4.27. Nos 38-48 Christchurch Road are all variations on the flat roofed designs noted above. Nos 44, 46 and 48 were designed by Alexander Anderson in 1905 and No 38 is a later Anderson work from 1920. Nos 40-42 are probably by another designer but wisely defer to their immediate neighbours. No 38 Christchurch Road is effectively half of the design for No 1 Sandringham Road, extruded to fit the narrow site, and with some additional embellishments, notably the crenellated projecting bay in the centre of the Sandringham Road elevation. No 44 ('The Nook') in mid-terrace is a similar 'half unit', distinguished by an arched opening at ground floor level which incorporates both the recessed entrance and the hall window, and with the name picked out in mannered Arts & Crafts lettering. Nos 46-48 are of a single build and although contemporary, differ subtly from No 44; they share the same arched entrance but the two storey projecting bay windows are slightly larger. The tower-like polygonal bay window on the corner is a unique feature amongst Anderson's work, and its facets carry the name 'Hillcrest' and two Tudor roses in pargetting. Anderson certainly lived at No 48 during the 1920s and may have originally designed it for himself.
- 4.28. The remaining buildings in Christchurch Road, Nos 50-62, contain extreme contrasts of scale and style. Given its suburban context, No 50 is arguably Alexander Anderson's most eccentric design. It is a linear single storey house dating from 1920, whose style defies easy categorisation. The roughcast render and battered chimneys allude to Scottish vernacular motifs but the verandah (with reinforced concrete piers) recalls Spanish or Latin American forms, and the steep hipped roof owes nothing to any of these.
- 4.29. Dating from 1924, No 52 is the last Alexander Anderson building on Christchurch Road. It is almost conventional by the standards of his other work, but still incorporates numerous individual touches. It is of three storeys but the top storey is recessed as a kind of penthouse behind a section of flat roof cum balcony, which helps reduce its apparent bulk. The white rendered front elevation retains a two storey bay window, but it is executed more conventionally in timber, with tile-hung spandrels. Nevertheless the red brick entrance bay terminated by a 'crowstepped' pediment, and Anderson's characteristic half-cylindrical oriel window are typical idiosyncrasies. Of the remaining buildings, Nos 54-56 and 58-60 are pre First World War villas, Nos 54-56 having slight Arts & Crafts overtones in its rendered elevation and deep eaves over two storey bay windows. No 60A is a post 1925 infill building and No 62, on the corner with Garrick Road, is identical to No 22 Christchurch Road described above.

Abington Park

- 4.30. Abington Park is significant as it comprises the remnants of an 18th century designed landscape overlaid by elements of a classic late 19th /early 20th century municipal park. It was the magnet which attracted high quality residential development to the area in the first decades of the 20th century, and is, by definition, the principal space within the proposed conservation area.
- 4.31. The 1900-1 OS map suggests that the original park was centred on Abington Abbey and St Peter & St Paul's church, and its character became more diffuse as it merged into the surrounding agricultural landscape. As might be expected of this period, the planting was very informal and features such as the existing Water

Tower and the Hunting Gate were treated as incidental 'events' rather than deliberate focal points. The only walks were laid out to the east of the Abbey, where planting was concentrated to screen a more private lawn area.

- 4.32. The original park, to the west of Park Avenue South, formed the nucleus of the 1897 public park, whose extent is still defined by a low stone boundary wall. This area, with its meandering paths and leisure amenities such as the bandstand and bowling green, retains numerous features characteristic of the era, and is quite densely planted with specimen trees. However Abington Park's early 20th century expansion to the east of Park Avenue South is markedly different in character, and is essentially a re-creation of elements of the 18th century landscape tradition. It is characterised by extensive open spaces, divided by a radial network of paths which form tree lined avenues, and the entire perimeter is strongly defined by a double avenue of trees, to contrast with the buildings facing the park. The scope of the improvements was also considerably more ambitious than in the earlier phase: for instance, two artificial lakes were formed and an existing spinney was remodelled around them, but despite the level of intervention, the whole effect was intended to be one of 'nature improved', in the 18th century manner.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. In deciding whether conservation area designation is justified the prime consideration is the extent to which the area is of significant historic or architectural interest. The preceding analysis demonstrates that the Abington Park area does have a distinct, special character of considerable architectural and historic interest that is worthy of protection. The area was developed over a relatively short period in the first quarter of the 20th century and as a result the housing has a clear unity of scale, form and appearance, which is further enhanced by the unique parkland setting.
- 5.2. There is already local support for the designation of a conservation area which has come from the Abington Preservation Society, a local amenity group. Planning officers issued a possible boundary for consideration by the group and it was requested that consideration be made of a larger area.
- 5.3. Before formally designating this area as a conservation area it is important to ensure that views and comments of local residents, property owners and other interested parties is sought. This will be undertaken by writing to all residents within the proposed boundary and seeking views from Area Partnerships 1 and 5 which cover the proposed Area at their meetings in September
- 5.4. The consultation period will begin shortly and end on Friday 30 September. A Report will be submitted to Executive on 31 October concerning the final designation.

6. Government Advice

- 6.1. The primary Government advice relating to conservation areas is contained in PPG 15 - Planning and the Historic Environment. This document offers clear advice on the designation of conservation areas and the importance of assessing the area's special interest appropriately.

- 6.2. English Heritage offer advice on undertaking conservation area appraisals and this statement has been prepared in accordance with this advice.

7. Local Plan Policy

- 7.1. The Northampton Local Plan was adopted June 1997. The plan sets out the Borough Council's aspirations for protecting and enhancing the borough's historic assets and states how applications affecting conservation areas will be assessed. These policies will be strengthened by this character appraisal, which will offer greater detail regarding those elements which give the area its distinctiveness.

8. Trees

- 8.1. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 makes provision for the protection of trees in the interests of amenity and the Act makes special provision for trees within conservation areas. Well established trees make an important and positive contribution to the local environment and therefore it is essential to safeguard these features for the benefit of the community. Trees over 76mm (3") in diameter within the conservation area are automatically protected from damage or felling. Six weeks prior notice must be given to the local authority for any works likely to affect a tree within a conservation area (this includes work which may affect the roots). Within that time the local authority may decide to make a Tree Preservation Order. Once a tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order it is an offence to cut down, uproot, prune, damage or destroy a tree without the written consent of the Borough Council.

9. Article 4 Directions

- 9.1. Owners of residential properties can undertake some alterations to their property without the need to apply for Planning Permission – this is known as Permitted Development. (Permitted Development only applies to buildings in single residential use). In sensitive locations local planning authorities can remove specified Permitted Development by introducing Article 4 Directions. Such directions are not used lightly but are given careful consideration before introduction. Although not exclusively for use in a conservation area, the primary purpose of the directions is to preserve the character and appearance of sensitive locations. The case for an Article 4 Direction should be as cogent as possible, and where considered necessary, Directions will be used to protect the historic environment. It is suggested that the need to introduce such a Direction be considered further both by planning officers and as part of the consultation exercise.

10. Preservation and Enhancement

- 10.1. The Borough Council remains committed to protecting the character and appearance of the proposed Abington Park conservation area and believe that where appropriate the area should be enhanced. This will be achieved by encouraging sympathetic repair and maintenance of buildings and by carefully controlling the design of new development, controlling demolition, protecting existing trees and implementing enhancement schemes.

11. Maintenance and Repair

- 11.1. Regular maintenance and repair is the key to the preservation of historic buildings. For modest expenditure a building can be kept weather tight and routine maintenance can prevent more extensive and expensive repairs becoming necessary. The repair and maintenance of a building is part of the day-to-day responsibility of the property owner. Despite routine maintenance, all buildings will, from time-to-time require more substantial repair.
- 11.2. The primary purpose of repair is to restrain the process of decay without damaging the character of the building or destroying its historic fabric. It is essential for repairs to a historic building are kept to a minimum and that they are undertaken in a sympathetic manner which respects the age and character of the building.
- 11.3. Before carrying out repairs the cause of decay should be established and the appropriate remedial work undertaken to rectify it. Without rectifying the cause there will be a repetition of the problems.

12. Listed Building Consent

- 12.1. Listed Building Consent is required for the demolition of, or any works of alteration or extension which would affect the character or appearance of a listed building. The regulations apply to both external and internal alterations. For the purposes of listed building control any object or structure which is fixed to the building or has formed part of the land since before July 1948 are also treated as part of the listed building.
- 12.2. Repair works do not normally require listed building consent. However, it is always advisable to consult the Conservation Officer before commencing work to a listed building.

13. Demolition in Conservation areas

- 13.1. Conservation area Consent is required for certain demolition work within a conservation area:–

- ◆ The demolition of a building with a cubic content of more than 115m³
- ◆ The demolition of wall, fences or gates above 1m in height and abutting the highway (2m elsewhere)
- ◆ Buildings subject to a statutory order or notice.

If the building is a listed building a separate Listed Building Consent is also required.

14. Design Guidance

- 14.1. The Northampton Local Plan sets out the Borough Council's policies for works relating to listed Buildings and proposed development within conservation areas. In particular the following factors should be taken into account
- ◆ New buildings should be designed to complement the scale, proportions and rhythm of the surrounding buildings.
 - ◆ New infill buildings should respect the common building line created by existing buildings and not detract from their setting.

- ◆ Extensions should be designed to be subservient to the original building
 - ◆ Materials should be in accordance with those traditionally used in the Conservation area.
 - ◆ Boundary walls and railings should be incorporated in a similar way to those already in existence.
- 14.2. In conservation areas detailed examination of the design, siting and layout of development proposals is necessary to achieve a high standard of development and to preserve the character of the area.
- 14.3. When proposals for refurbishment are considered the opportunity to replace lost features should also be considered e.g. replaced windows and doors, replacement railings. Again, careful attention will need to be given to the detail of each feature before work is proposed.
- 14.4. It is proposed to prepare Supplementary Planning Guidance relating to design issues for all conservation areas. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will form part of the Northampton Local Development Framework.

15. New Development

- 15.1. It is essential that new developments harmonise with the existing character of the surrounding area and is carefully designed in terms of scale, massing and attention to detail. The conservation area should not be viewed as a method of preventing development but a tool to ensure that new development is both appropriate to the area and of the highest standard in terms of design and use of materials.

16. Street Furniture

- 16.1. Street furniture particularly highway signage, can and does have a significant impact of the character of a conservation area.
- 16.2. The Borough Council adopted ten design principles in January 2000 to guide the provision of highway signage in a manner which was sympathetic to the local environment whilst safeguarding highway safety. The Northamptonshire County Council is the highway authority and consults the Borough Council on various highway schemes – when able the Borough Council will apply the design principles to minimise ‘street clutter’ in conservation areas.
- 16.3. The Borough Council will apply the same principles with regard to the provision of benches, litter- bins and other forms of street furniture.