

# Mears Ashby Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document



**Adopted February 2017**

## SUMMARY

This Village Design Statement (VDS) seeks to reflect the wishes of the inhabitants of Mears Ashby, providing guidance as to how the village and its surrounds should develop in relation to the design of any future development.

In May 2014, following a period of promoting awareness of the value of such a document, including an open meeting in the village hall sponsored by the Parish Council, a detailed questionnaire was delivered to 215 households seeking views on the important aspects of design and character within the village and Parish. Everybody in the Parish from teenager upwards was invited to submit a response - in total 119 responses were received. Together with a thorough desktop and field assessment of the character of the Parish, including a recently produced Conservation Area Appraisal, the Parish Council, assisted by the Borough Council of Wellingborough, were then able to identify a list of appropriate guidelines that reflect both the aspirations of residents and the defined character of the village and the Parish.

There are three distinct geographical areas covered by the recommendations in this document: the conservation area in the centre of the village, the remaining village and then the outlying area within the parish boundary. Whilst this VDS covers the entirety of Mears Ashby Parish it provides the most extensive level of guidance around the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area covering the village core. Much of this guidance picks up on the detailed observations made within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

The protection of the intrinsic rural setting and open green spaces within the village is seen by the inhabitants as being extremely important. Therefore where development does occur, many of the key areas of guidance included in this VDS will seek to ensure that development is designed to fit the traditional, rural village setting that has prevailed here for centuries. The design guidelines applicable to the village can be found in the highlighted boxes and supported by illustrative material where appropriate. Together, they are intended to ensure that the appearance and quality of build in the village and its environs respects and reflects the elements of Mears Ashby that lend themselves to its rural charm and cherished character.



The Manor House, Manor Road

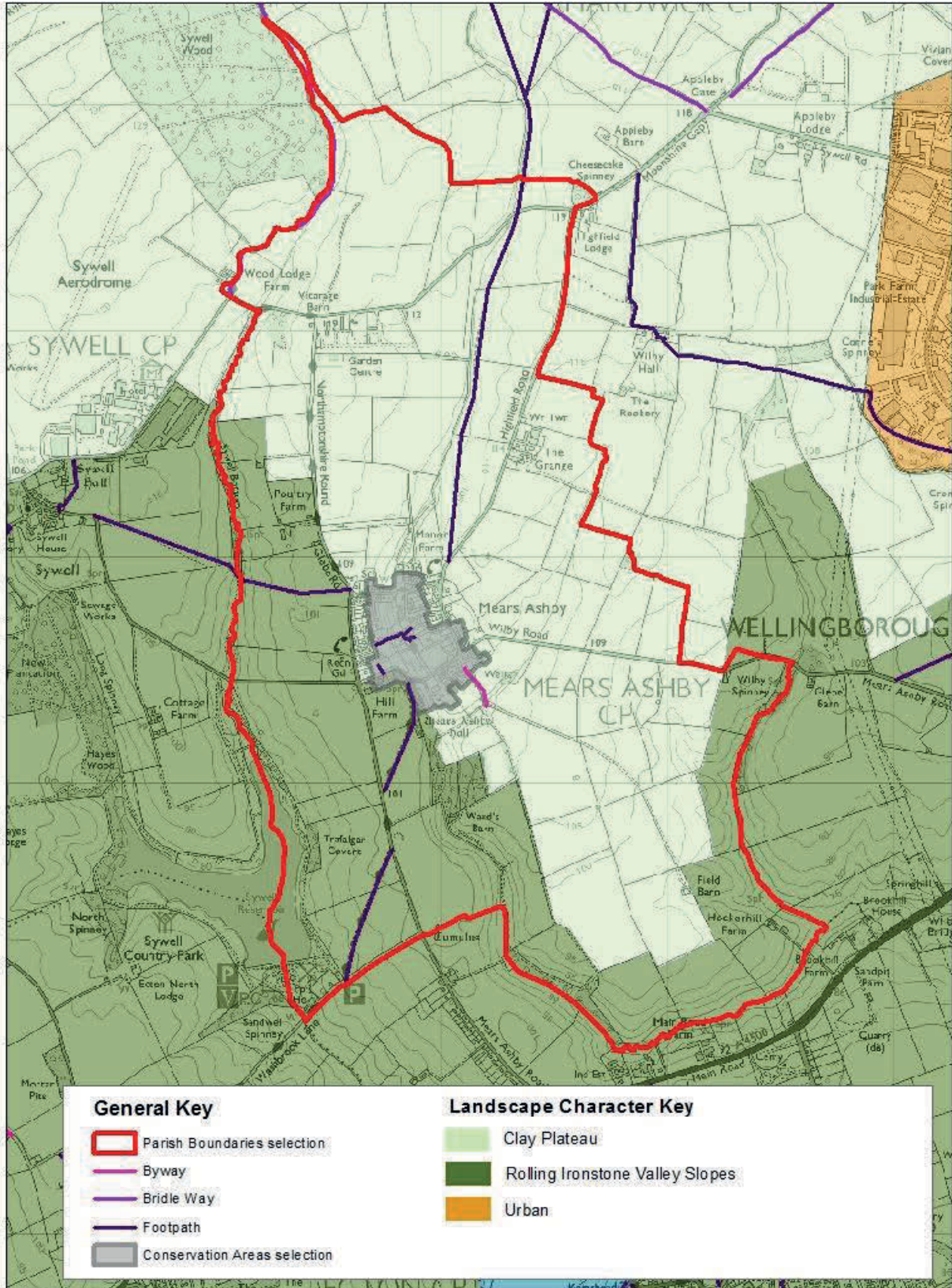


The Old Red Lion, North Street



A newly built dwelling,  
North Street

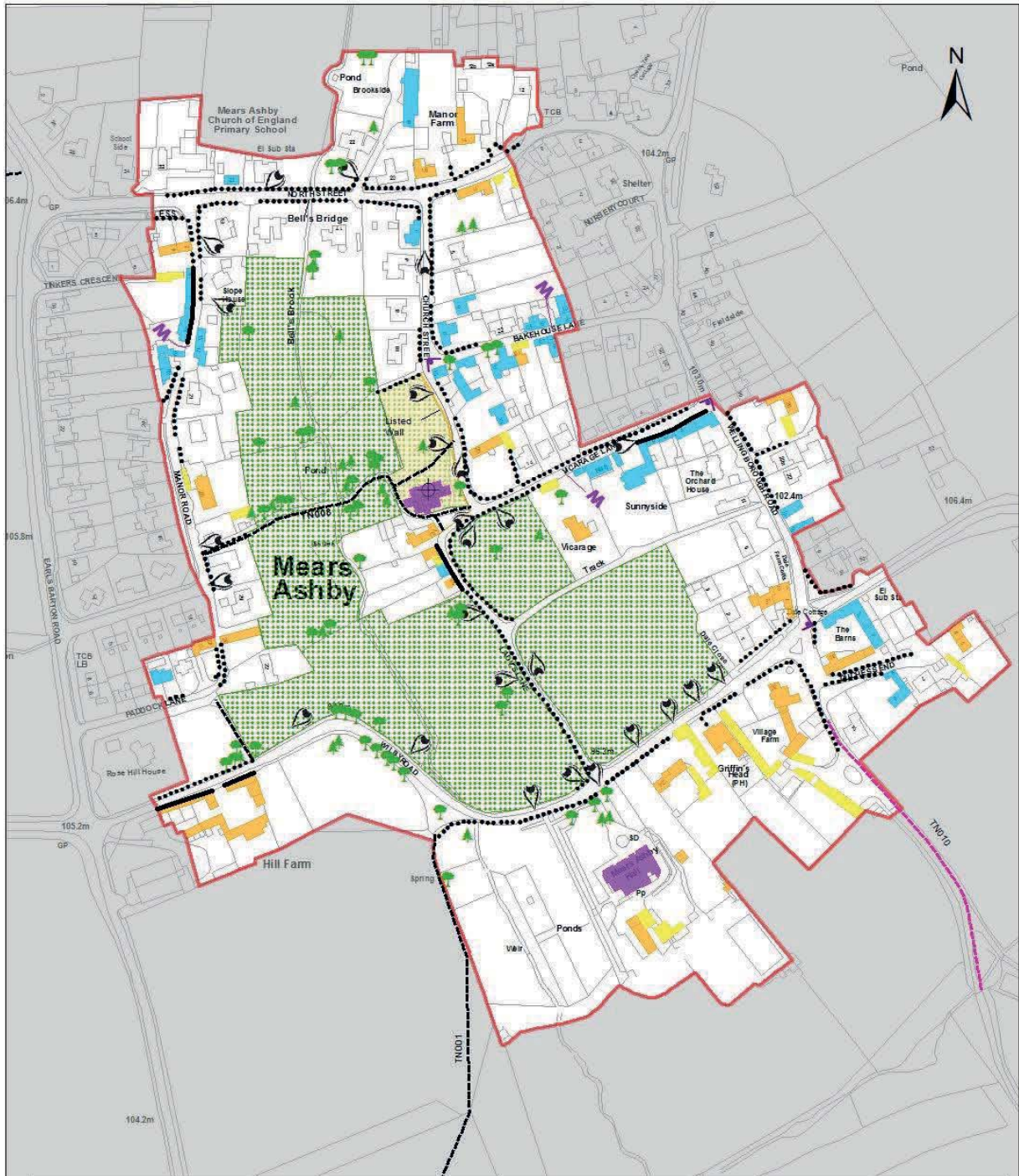
Ordnance Survey Map 1



General Key		Landscape Character Key	
	Parish Boundaries selection		Clay Plateau
	Byway		Rolling Ironstone Valley Slopes
	Bridle Way		Urban
	Footpath		
	Conservation Areas selection		

		Built Environment Scale: 1:50,000 This map is accurate to the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 scale.	© Crown Copyright and Database right 2016. Ordnance Survey 100049662. Data Provided	Mears Ashby Parish	0 0.225 0.45 0.9 Kilometers
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Conservation Area Map 2



Key	
Building Line	—
Footpath	- - - -
Byway	-----
Important Walls	.....
Important Corner	⋈
Important Trees	🌳
Landmark	📍
Pinch Point	⌢
Vista	👁️
Conservation Area	🟩
Grade II* Listed Buildings	🟪
Grade II Listed Buildings	🟠
Curtilage Listed Buildings	🟡
Buildings of Townscape Merit	🟢
Important Open Space	🌿
Area Identity	🟨

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

### What is a Village Design Statement (VDS)?

- 1.1 A VDS is a document prepared by a village, usually with the support of the local planning authority, to identify the most important characteristics of a village or village area and provide guidelines to steward appropriate development in keeping with the local environment.
- 1.2 In the event that a VDS is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by the local planning authority then it can provide a material consideration of weight when determining planning applications in the area it covers. The VDS would be considered 'supplementary' as it will provide a greater level of local detail that will enable officers to more accurately interpret the policies of the development plan encouraging quality, locally appropriate design.

### Who is it for?

- 1.3 In a small Parish, such as Mears Ashby, change is brought about not only by developments of new housing but also by smaller alterations and extensions to homes and gardens, open spaces, trees, footpaths and walls. These smaller alterations can change the look and feel of the whole village but should still be regarded in this context as development. This VDS has therefore been produced to be read and used by anyone making a relevant change to the existing fabric of the village. This will principally include anybody preparing a planning application that will result in design or character considerations and the officers charged with determining the application. Ideally it will also influence the approach taken by anybody undertaking works allowed under permitted development rights.

### How will it be used?

- 1.4 This VDS is to be adopted by Borough Council of Wellingborough as a Supplementary Planning Document. The guidelines set out within this document will comprise a material consideration when planning applications or other matters relating to the guidance of development in the Parish are being assessed in the future. Principally this VDS will supplement the design policies of the local plan and provide a greater level of detail in terms of how these policies should be applied in the context of Mears Ashby.
- 1.5 The North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Policy 11) limits development in villages to small scale infill on suitable sites where this would not materially harm the character of the settlement and residential amenity. Policies 2, 3 and 8 also set out various criteria to ensure that development respects and enhances local character by ensuring that development responds to its topography, wider context, the landscape and historic setting within which it is located and the local streetscape. This VDS will supplement those policies by helping to define the local character in the parish. Mears Ashby is also host to an extensive conservation area covering much of the central core of the village. To a degree, the guidelines set out in this VDS will facilitate the successful management of the conservation area and ensure that any new development at least preserves but where possible enhances its setting.

Mears Ashby from the air, Copyright: Google Earth Inc.



## 2.0 THE EVOLUTION OF MEARS ASHBY

- 2.1 Mears Ashby is a village located approximately 5 miles to the west of the town of Wellingborough, lying in the centre of its parish where four main roads converge: that from Northampton enters the south side and a road crossing the parish from east to west connects the village with Wilby and Sywell.
- 2.2 Prior to the Norman Conquest, Mears Ashby was part of a Saxon Estate owned by the theyn Bondi. The place-name “Ash-by” or “Ash-tree by” relates to a “farm by the trees” and its early purpose was to supply timber for Bondi’s wider estate.<sup>1 2</sup>
- 2.3 At the time of the Domesday Book (1086) the village is recorded as comprising 20 households and a manor. The total population was, therefore, perhaps 100, growing crops in the arable land and grazing animals beside the streams. The farmland would have been on the lighter soils to the south while the area to the north was still extensively forested. There would have been sufficient space for that population on the east side of the village brook.

Bakehouse Lane: Then and now



- 2.4 In the first centuries after the Conquest, the village grew to its present shape of many lanes and small paddocks. Perhaps the earliest development was a lane linking two Roman sites (to north and south) making today’s Wellingborough Road. This had a string of crofts along its east side like any village street.

<sup>1</sup> The suffix “by” means a farmstead, indicating a Danish presence.

<sup>2</sup> W G Callis *Mears Ashby: From Ice Age to Space Age*, 1991 (unpublished).

- 2.5 Two separate manors were formed in this period. Whilst it is not clear from records which came first, an Elizabethan survey<sup>3</sup> refers, firstly, to the “Church Close” (land north of the churchyard, which was much smaller then) “whereon stood the north manor of the lord.” The site of the church may have been chosen for its defensive position relative to the bank of the stream and perhaps the first lord after the Conquest settled there and put up a small wooden church beside his home, later building a bigger manor house a little to the north. Church Street from that point to North Street is well-sunken, showing great age. It would lead from the north manor house to the farm complex (Manor Farm) of that owner.<sup>4</sup>

View down Church Street to North Street



From Wilby Road across site of Ancient Manor to Old Vicarage



Manor Farm House



Manor House Pond



- 2.6 A royal commission survey<sup>5</sup> refers to a small rectangular pond in the valley bottom “much altered by recent landscaping, bounded by a massive earthen dam 2 metres high on its downstream side which is thought to be medieval in origin.” The pond, still in existence today in the grounds of the present Manor House (on Manor Road), lies approximately 50 metres west of Church Close and may have been associated with the original North Manor House.

<sup>3</sup> *Survey of the Manor of Ashbie Maris, 1577 for the Rt Hon Wm Vaux of Harrowden*. Fenland Field Officer, Cambridgeshire Archaeological Committee: *1577 Manorial Survey*. At that time William Vaux held the lordship of Mears Ashby.

<sup>4</sup> W G Callis op cit

<sup>5</sup> Royal Commission for the Historic Monuments of England, Vol 2, p109. 1979

- 2.7 With regard to the South Manor House the royal commission survey refers to “Home Close”, west of Dale Farm/Dale Close and opposite the Griffin’s Head public house, and a large square enclosure in the centre bounded by scarps and banks up to 1.5 metres high. The Vaux survey (of which the royal commission appears to have been unaware), however, reveals this as the site of the South Manor House comprising a hall and parlour of 5.5 bays, milk house, kitchen, gelding house, store house, stable all of 6 bays, plus another stable, rye/hay barns of 7 bays, etc. in an estimated 3.5 acre site. William Callis feels that this site is “likely to be of great antiquity” and, as the location of the homestead of the very first head of the community, was in fact the earlier of the two manorial sites.
- 2.8 The village appears to have gradually developed in a westward direction. Several embanked and scarped closes project beyond the existing house plots along the steep valley side immediately west of the church, presumably former closes now abandoned.<sup>6</sup> Later, as the population grew, the stream was crossed and another street, today’s Manor Road, was added running north-south.<sup>7</sup>
- 2.9 The village’s place-name is thought to have evolved from the early Asbi (Domesday, 1086), through Essebi (1166), Aissebi (1176), Northesseby (1220, probably intended to distinguish it from Castle Ashby to the south), Esseby Mares (1281, marking the addition of the personal surname of Robert de Mares whom king Henry III granted/gave ownership of the Ashby Manor (north half) in 1242), Mares Assheby (1297), Ass Meeres Asshebye (1578), Maires Ashby (1659), and Ashby Mares (1791).<sup>8</sup> It’s anatomy, therefore, comprises the original Saxon “farm by the trees” with the addition of the surname of a subsequent lord of the manor.
- 2.10 The estimated population at Domesday of 100 had doubled by the time of the Vaux survey of 1577 to approximately 200, based on the record of “47 houses, plus one decayed and one now a stable”. Bridges records “90 families” in 1722 amounting to perhaps 400-450 people, and records for later in that century of 12 full-time farmers and 18 tradesmen, including 3 carpenters, 2 bakers, 2 blacksmiths, 2 tailors, a weaver, a butcher, a mason, a barber, a shoemaker and 2 publicans, paint a picture of a healthy and growing community with a strong socio-economic base.<sup>9</sup>
- 2.11 Official population figures compiled in the subsequent centuries show numbers steadily growing from this level, but suffering a set-back around the turn of and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from which it is only gradually recovering, viz:
- |      |            |
|------|------------|
| 1821 | 442 people |
| 1861 | 525 people |
| 1901 | 367 people |
| 1951 | 333 people |
| 1981 | 416 people |
| 2011 | 442 people |

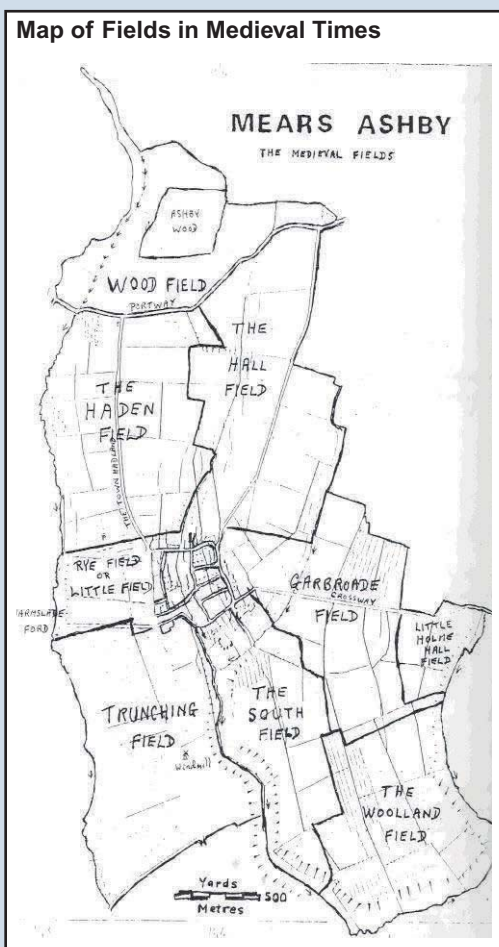
<sup>6</sup> RCHME op cit

<sup>7</sup> W G Callis

<sup>8</sup> from *Place Names of Northamptonshire*, Gover, Mawer and Stenton, 1933

<sup>9</sup> Bridges ii 137 1722

- 2.12 A high level of building took place in the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century following the Enclosure, reflecting a long period of overall agricultural prosperity for the bigger farmers, the landowners and the clergy, whose income came from farms and glebe rents. Nevertheless, the sharp drop in numbers noted at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was due to the nationwide agricultural depression, with the offer of higher wages in factories and towns, together with homeworking in domestic workshops (e.g. boot and shoe) giving over to full factory production.
- 2.13 Resultantly, historic map coverage of the village shows that it changed very little between the years 1888 and 1952,<sup>10</sup> and that the visually important central valley area had remained undeveloped right up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The built fabric was laid out at a relatively low density and was characterized by vernacular narrow-depth cottages and barns, the architectural style and layout of which is felt to be locally distinctive.



- 2.14 However, a process of infilling and peripheral village expansion began in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the 1978 map showing, in particular, encroachment of residential valley development onto the central area south of North Street, east of Manor Road and west of Church Street. Current coverage shows that the loss of open valley land has continued, with additional residential plot development on Church Street and Manor Road and the north side of North Street. This loss is considered to be intrusive and damaging to the character of the natural valley in this part of the conservation area.
- 2.15 Moreover, a significant proportion of the dwelling-houses built in the conservation area over the last 60 years or so have been constructed of mass-produced brick and concrete roofing tiles and with a general absence of craftsman-like architectural detailing. Built development of this type is not locally distinctive and, as such, is damaging to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

<sup>10</sup> The village extent at 1952 roughly coincides with the present conservation area

## 3.0 CHARACTERISING MEARS ASHBY AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

### The local landscape setting

- 3.1 The rural areas of the Parish are predominantly defined by two distinct landscape character areas, both of which abut the main village of Mears Ashby. To the north, the larger rural expanse of the Parish comprises aspects of 'clay plateau' which stretches as far as the A14 corridor. To the south of the village, the landscape comprises 'rolling ironstone valley slopes', a landscape characteristic that forms a band around the northern edge of the Northampton urban area<sup>11</sup>. These distinct landscape areas can be identified as part of Map 1 of this statement.
- 3.2 Higher parish land in the north and east is covered in Boulder Clay and rises to a height of 122 metres AOD. A band of Lower Estuarine Sands and clays separates this from the slightly lower areas of Northampton Sand. The latter predominates in the west and south and is cut by the steep-sided valleys of south south east-flowing streams where the Upper Lias Clay is exposed down to a height of 76 metre AOD. This area of landscape is characterised by long views over the Sywell Plateau, an area of the countryside that comprises sweeping fields that are only broken by a limited level of tree cover and rural development.

Clay Landscape Panorama (North)



Rolling ironstone valley (South-west)



- 3.3 The land to the south of the village is characterized to a greater extent by its hydrology and watercourses, comprising a greater mix of shallow valleys and wooded hollows. The creation of one such stream by this local geology, the Swanspool Brook (known locally as Bell's Brook), flowing through the village centre, coupled with the availability of a series of adjacent springs and a plentiful supply of well water, appears to be a key factor in the settlement's siting in this particular location.

<sup>11</sup> As characterised in the Northamptonshire Current Landscape Character Assessment

### **LANDSCAPE GUIDELINE 1:**

Development in the village should seek to conserve and enhance the expansive, panoramic views to the north. Where possible it should enforce the sense of elevation and separation from the surrounding urban areas through the appropriate siting and scaling of development.

### **LANDSCAPE GUIDELINE 2:**

Any development that impacts on views or the character of the rural landscape to the south of the village should conserve and enhance the level of intimacy offered by the number of shallow valleys and hollows created by the small streams that run through and past the village.

### **LANDSCAPE GUIDELINE 3:**

All development on the edge of the village should maintain a vibrant and visually appealing urban fringe and should consolidate the role the village plays in characterising the rural area to both the north and south. Any necessary isolated development in the open countryside should similarly respect the landscape character and the rural pattern and form of development identified within the Northamptonshire Current Landscape Character Assessment.

## **The structure of Mears Ashby Village**

- 3.4 The primary component of the village's structure is the natural valley running north-south through its centre, terminating at both ends in the open countryside, with Bell's Brook flowing at the bottom. The street pattern which developed around this feature is roughly square in shape, described by Manor Road, North Street, Wellingborough Road and Wilby Road, with the intervening Church Street/Lady's Lane respecting the alignment of the brook. The settlement's form is, therefore, described as clustered or "agglomerated" with the various zones or elements linked together, rather like a jigsaw puzzle, and morphologically interconnected by the striking central natural valley.
- 3.5 This valley area is described in the Vaux survey of 1577 as including 19 small enclosures called variously "close", "field", "croft", "spinney" or "pingel/pyghtle", indicating that historically the village had a significant proportion of open land within its urban structure. The modern village is characterized by the memory of this generous medieval open land in the various paddocks, fields and treed areas on either side of the brook and also on the east side of Lady's Lane, the site of the south manor.

- 3.6 The existence of a small village green immediately west of the church (later absorbed into the garden of Church House in the 19<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>12 13</sup> suggests that the area around the northern manor house and the church emerged as the settlement's social nucleus. Certainly today, viewed from the vantage point of the churchyard, there is a clear sense of being at the heart of the settlement.

### URBAN PATTERN GUIDELINE 1:

Any development within the village should respect the urban form and draw cues from the historic patterns of development described above. Development should seek to respect and retain the nucleated form of the village, based around the manor house and the church area - see photos below.



*"Mears Ashby is unique in the Borough of Wellingborough, if not the entire county, in having such extensive tracts of unspoilt open land contained within its urban form. This central valley, together with the open space east of Lady's Lane, plays a fundamental part in defining the character and appearance of the conservation area."*

<sup>12</sup> W G Callis

<sup>13</sup> The village pump stood there and its well is now under the roadway

## Notable buildings

- 3.7** Mears Ashby is home to a number of listed buildings, all of which lie within the extensive conservation area covering the core of the village. Whilst no listed buildings exist around the village fringe lying outside the conservation area designation or within the open countryside, development in these areas still has the ability to impact on the setting and appearance of listed structures through their contribution to or deleterial effect on short and long views alike.
- 3.8** Listed buildings in Mears Ashby (see purple, orange and yellow colouration on the village map), commonly feature:
- Squared or regular coursed lias<sup>14</sup> with either ironstone or limestone;
  - Ashlar gable parapets and kneelers; occasional gabled roof dormers (see Church House and 14 North Street);
  - Chimney stacks generally in brick and stone together, but also seen exclusively in either brick or stone, located variously at ridge or gable end. Occasional ashlar stacks with moulded stone cornice (see 31 Lady's Lane);
  - Wooden casement windows with wood lintels; stone mullion windows, occasionally including transoms (see The Old Vicarage). Occasional cast-iron glazing bars (see Griffin's Head PH);
  - Roofs mainly slate or plain tile; pantile; thatch at 25 Lady's Lane, 5 Duchess End, 16 North Street and 1 Duchess End; Collyweston slate at Mears Ashby Hall and dovecote; and corrugated metal (see barn at 30 Wilby Road).
- 3.9** Apart from the Grade II\* listed parish church dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>15</sup> the listed buildings are fairly evenly spread out within the conservation area, with identifiable clustering perhaps in the Wilby Road between the Hall and Duchess End, and, again, properties east and south of the church. They mainly comprise Grade II post-medieval domestic examples either of 2 or 2.5 storeys (the majority) or of 1.5 storeys (the remainder). Many (68%) of the Grade II listed buildings date from the period 1685-1750 and this is likely in part to reflect the relative political and economic stability at that time which gave people the confidence to invest in land and property, but may equally be related to developments in building construction techniques and the survivability of more robust solid stone buildings.
- 3.10** In many cases primary listed buildings will have adjuncts within their historic or present freeholds including outbuildings, barns and boundary walling. These are termed "curtilage-listed" buildings and the fabric enjoys equivalent statutory protection to that afforded to the primary or "nominal" listed building. These are shown in yellow colouration on the Appraisal Map.
- 3.11** Over 40 additional buildings have been identified as "of note" (unlisted but considered as character enhancers) as shown in blue colouration on the Appraisal Map. These buildings are mainly 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in date, of local stone or brick and with slate roof covering. Whilst not at present capable of being

<sup>14</sup> Generic geological term covering types of ironstone, oxidised sandstone and Mears Ashby "Pendle" stone

<sup>15</sup> Note: all dating refers to buildings' first construction phase

considered for statutory listing, they are recognised as examples of good quality vernacular architecture. Taken together with the various listed and curtilage-listed buildings, they help to create a strong sense of place, making a positive contribution to the listed buildings' settings and to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole.

### CHARACTER GUIDELINE 1:

Any development in the village should ensure that the character contribution of the listed buildings and buildings of note identified on the village map should be maintained through the sympathetic treatment of their setting.

### CHARACTER GUIDELINE 2:

In the instance that any new development seeks to utilise traditional materials and design it should draw cues from any nearby listed buildings or buildings of note that have been identified as providing a positive contribution to the character of the village.

## Materials

- 3.12 Common materials and features of special architectural or historic interest that are identified by both the Conservation Area Appraisal prepared for the village, and through the sentiments of residents, include the following, with some typical examples given in brackets:-

### *Walling*

- 3.13 Squared or regular coursed lias, often featuring Mears Ashby "Pendle" stone; ironstone; limestone; stone with brick dressings on corners and window/door surrounds (28 North Street); red stock brick; white, cream or grey-painted render to front or gable stonework or brickwork.

### *Miscellaneous Features*

- 3.14 Ashlar gable parapets and kneelers; decorative brick detail at eaves (double row of stretchers) and verge (15 Church Street); plain verge; exposed rafters on eaves; decorative verge weather-boarding in matt black (16 Manor Road), or plain boarding in white; chamfered engineering brick string course at 1<sup>st</sup> floor level; timber gabled porch canopy; hipped open double porch; chimney stacks in brick or stone or combinations thereof; occasional ashlar stacks with moulded cornice; 2-stage chimneys with single or double decorative cornice (Sunnyside, Vicarage Lane); clay/vitreous chimney pots; pyramidal hipped roof (20 Manor Road); flat-roofed or gabled dormers at eaves (wall-plate) or on purlin.

### *Free-Standing Walling*

- 3.15 Stone with engineering brick or flat stone capping; occasional brick. "Important walls" are shown in a black dotted notation on the Appraisal Map, and walls which are themselves listed are indicated accordingly.



Fig A



Fig B



Fig C

- Fig A: gabled roof dormers
- Fig B: moulded stone cornice
- Fig C: occasional cast iron glazing bars
- Fig D: thatched roof
- Fig E: collyweston roof
- Fig F: corrugated iron roof
- Fig G: open land
- Fig H: painted render
- Fig I: stone with brick corner
- Fig J: verge weather boarding



Fig D



Fig E



Fig G



Fig F



Fig G



Fig I



Fig H



Fig J



- Fig K: pyramid hipped roof
- Fig L: triple roman clay tile
- Fig M: cast iron window
- Fig N: narrowing street scene
- Fig P: local stone
- Fig Q: thatch/ironstone/pantile roof

*Roofing*

- 3.16 Predominantly slate and plain tile; clay pantile; thatch; Collyweston slate; corrugated metal; triple-Roman clay tile (outbuildings at 11 North Street).

*Windows and Doors*

- 3.17 Ledged and braced tongue-and-groove timber door, white painted; plank door in white; yellow-painted timber doors; cast iron windows (5/7 Paddocks Lane); timber casement windows with glazing bars or “diamond” leading; stone mullioned windows, occasionally with transoms (31 Lady’s Lane and The Vicarage).

*Use of stone*

- 3.18 Mears Ashby Stone is part of the Northampton Sand (Duston Member) geological formation known as “Pendle”, and is a limestone which forms good freestone. It is pale yellow in colour and best seen in Mears Ashby Hall where it was used in large ashlar blocks and is relatively intricately carved in the porch. The stone was also used for the Vicarage and the Callis’ farmhouse at 30 Wilby Road.
- 3.19 However, many of the historic buildings in Mears Ashby consist of rubble-stones that are represented by a mixture of ironstones, limonitic (oxidized) sandstone and Mears Ashby Stone, hence the use of the generic term “lias” in the various listing citations. Of note, 31 Lady’s Lane is constructed mainly of local Mears Ashby Stone ashlar and rubble-stone.<sup>16</sup>

**MATERIALS GUIDELINE 1:**

It will generally be expected that the materials adopted in any new build development or the extension of existing properties relate to the palette of materials described in this statement as being characteristic of Mears Ashby. This will be of particular importance in the conservation area or its setting, in the wider rural area

**MATERIALS GUIDELINE 2:**

In the case of extensions, particular attention should be given to the use of materials that match (or at the very least complement) the main body of the existing building. This guideline relates to the way these materials are used to construct the extension, such as the pattern and depth of coursing, the size of brick or stone block or the design and rhythm present in the construction of any new roof.

<sup>16</sup> *Strategic Stone Study: A Building Stone Atlas of Northamptonshire* English Heritage (Historic England) 2011

## Characteristic design

- 3.20 One of the key aspects of Mears Ashby village, and the conservation area in particular, is the form and appearance of its constituent historic buildings. The 1952 Ordnance Survey map records the position before the later 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century expansion. It shows an irregular, informal, organic built form characterized by vernacular narrow-depth cottages and barns, typically gable-on to the road either at rear-edge-of-highway or slightly set back or eaves-on to the road at rear-edge-of-highway. The majority of the cottages, whether listed or otherwise, are 2-storey in height with a lesser proportion at 2.5 or 1.5 storeys. Detached properties set back within their own grounds also occasionally occur, such as at 18 North Street, 30 Wilby Road, the Manor House and the Vicarage, and there is a particular contrast with the two examples of polite architecture in the form of Mears Ashby Hall and the parish church.

Mears Ashby Hall



Pinch point in Paddock Lane



- 3.21 Narrowing in the street scene occurs in Manor Road, Vicarage Lane and Bakehouse Lane, creating a pleasing sense of enclosure (see “Pinch Point” symbols). Also, “Important Corners” (see notation symbol), which assist with legibility of the urban form, are noted at Wilby Road/Wellingborough Road, Wellingborough Road/Vicarage Lane and Church Street/Bakehouse Lane.
- 3.22 For a village the size of Mears Ashby the survival of thatch in the case of four cottages is particularly notable. Free-standing walling along back-edge-of-highway is another important element of the conserved environment. Mainly in local stone, these help to visually link the historic buildings in the street scene and their preservation should therefore be treated as no less important.

### DESIGN GUIDELINE 1:

Any new development in the Parish will be expected to respect the rural scale of both the village and its hinterland and adopt a design of a bulk, footprint, orientation and massing that is in keeping with its location.

### DESIGN GUIDELINE 2:

Whilst innovative contemporary design within the Parish is welcomed it should be of a high quality that similarly complements the scale and character of its surroundings. This will be of particular importance in the rural area and within the conservation area and its setting.

### DESIGN GUIDELINE 3:

Any small scale additions, either to or within the curtilage of the existing buildings of the village, which may if inappropriately sited result in a cluttered street scene should be hidden from view from any public highway as far as possible. Such additions include but are not limited to built refuse stores, outbuildings, solar panels and satellite dishes.

## Rights of way

- 3.23 Whilst most parts of the village are well linked by footpaths, rights of way and kerb-side pavements there are areas where safe passage by foot is hindered due to the lack of designated pedestrian routes with residents on foot often having to share surfaces with cars. There is a view that there should be pavements throughout the village enabling pedestrians to walk everywhere safely. An illustration of this is Pell's Hill where it becomes dangerous as the pavement runs out just past Lady's Lane.
- 3.24 Pavements also have a traffic calming effect: with the level of traffic through the village, particularly early morning and late afternoon, at school delivery and collection times, pavements become important to the safety of pedestrians and the narrowing of the road restricts the speed of traffic. Their presence can, however, also have an unfortunate impact on the safe flow of traffic as motorists often use them as an informal opportunity to park their cars with the stationary vehicles often then encroaching onto the road.

A danger to pedestrians: Pell's Hill (L)  
North Street at School time (R)



Church Walk



## RIGHTS OF WAY GUIDELINE 1:

Any new development should respect, maintain and ideally enhance the network of footpaths throughout the village, including kerb-side pavements. Where new pavements and footpaths are to be provided they should once again make reference to the materials used in the construction of the rights of way that they are to join up with.

## Open space and trees

- 3.25 Mears Ashby is unique in the Borough of Wellingborough, if not the entire county, in having such extensive tracts of unspoilt open land contained within its urban form. This central valley, together with the open space east of Lady's Lane, plays a fundamental part in defining the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 3.26 This central swathe of land is primarily paddock land which is still stocked. It affords a view for many of the properties across the valley which runs through the centre of the village and gives a spacious feeling, echoing its agrarian roots. Although the various tracts of land (shown as "Important Open Space" in green dot colouration on the village map) are not accessible by the public, they constitute a unique visual amenity as a dramatic verdant backdrop to the built environment in the remainder of the conservation area.

*"Mears Ashby is also host to an extensive conservation area covering much of the central core of the village. To a degree, the guidelines set out in this VDS will facilitate the successful management of the conservation area and ensure that any new development at least preserves but where possible enhances its setting."*

### Views across:

To church from Pell's Hill; Central valley from Lady's Lane; South from Church Path



- 3.27** Many of the important trees in the conservation area are located in this central open area, and these are shown indicatively on the village map as either deciduous or coniferous specimens. The contiguous churchyard, which constitutes quasi-public space, contributes positively to local character and is duly recognized on the map under the “Area Identity” notation for its role as both a vantage point for enjoying the valley landscape as well as a place of quiet contemplation.
- 3.28** In 2013 a donation of 400 sapling trees was granted to the village, as part of the Jubilee Woods Scheme and these are to be planted on the rough ground at the far end of the 6 acre sports field, situated at the Earls Barton Road/Sywell/ crossroads establishing a ‘Jubilee Wood’ to commemorate of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in a similar way to oak trees located on the green at the bottom of Pells Hill, planted to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee and on the corner of Highfield Road and North Street planted in 2013.

#### **OPEN SPACE AND TREES GUIDELINE 1:**

The important areas of open space in the village should be respected and their value should not be eroded by the encroachment development.

#### **OPEN SPACE AND TREES GUIDELINE 2:**

All new development should seek to maintain any existing areas of mature vegetation or trees that help provide the village with its sylvan and predominantly rural character. Additional planting will be encouraged along with the creation of new areas of open space that add biodiversity value to the Parish.